

CUPE K-12



We were pleased to have a phone briefing with Dr. Trevor Corneil, a member of Dr. Bonnie Henry's team.

In her Monday briefing, B.C.'s provincial health officer said that the province is now working on how and when classrooms might be able to reopen with the proper protections for teachers, staff and students. Protections include physical distancing measures, provisions for frequent hand washing, and regular cleaning of classrooms and other school spaces.

The priority will be providing classroom space for children of essential workers.

Dr. Henry said that they were not thinking about school over the summer, but want to make sure that they have plans that address all of their issues for the fall.

The return to school could be part of a "hybrid" model that mixes in-person instruction with distance learning.

Dr. Henry expects some children will be back in class before the end of the school year, but how that will look is still being discussed.

In solidarity and safety,

Warren Williams

K-12 Presidents Council President

Dr. Trevor Corneil responds to issues raised

On COVID-19 and children:

Children under 18 years of age are not as susceptible to the COVID-19 virus as adults and have a very low rate of infection. Those children who do get COVID-19 have mild symptoms and do very well. When a child is infected with the virus, spread occurs when they have symptoms and typically only in household settings. Doctors at BC Children's Hospital are reviewing the literature regularly and provide the information that informs the public health K-12 guidelines.

Ratios in schools:

Ratios are quite important in the context of how CUPE members and teachers do their job, but they are not helpful as a public health measure for COVID-19. The principles of hygiene, cleaning, and appropriate physical distancing are important. That will look different in every school, every single classroom, and in every setting.

On personal care issues:

When dealing with blood or body fluids, normal universal precautions and practices are all that is needed. No additional precautions are required. There will be more specific information on this in the next version of the public health K-12 guidance document from the BC Centre for Disease Control.

On temperature testing:

Temperature checking is not sensitive enough to be helpful in the school setting. Instead it is important to follow good hygiene practices, wash your hands frequently, and have a good cleaning regimen in place. As the virus is spread when persons are symptomatic, both adults and children should stay home when they are sick and see their doctor before returning to school.

On wearing masks:

Wearing masks might help you in a very crowded location where you're unable to practice physical distancing among adults such as on a crowded bus or in a mall. In a low prevalence setting where good hygiene and cleaning practices are in place, masks do not provide additional protection.