

February 19, 2021

Dr. Piotr Oglaza, Medical Officer of Health
Hastings Prince Edward Public Health
179 North Park Street
Belleville ON K8P 4P1

Dear Dr. Oglaza:

Re: Prioritization of vaccinations during Phase II in support of students with Special Education Needs and their staff

As staff and students in Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) and the rest of the province pivot between face-to-face and remote learning, members of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) would like to request the Ministry of Health and our local health unit to strengthen its commitment to ensuring the health and safety of students and HPEDSB employees who work directly with students with high special needs, in regional and self-contained placements. Further, we wish to impress upon the Ministry and our local health experts the urgent need to provide students who are of appropriate age and their staff, with access to vaccinations as quickly as possible.

It is important to note that many students within our regional programs are adults and not children. These adult learners often have underlying health conditions, comorbidities (e.g., developmental disabilities such as Down's syndrome, spina bifida etc.) and would benefit from vaccines whether they reside in group home settings, or at home with parents/guardians.

Employees who work on a day-to-day basis within regional classrooms are at high risk for potential infection due to the proximity they must have with students and other staff. Students often routinely require assistance with eating, bathroom support, and transferring or lifting in order to access their programming. Employees are in effect, required to be in close proximity to their students, which adds to the risk of transmission. We value the added responsibilities that these individuals take on and feel they should have access to vaccination programs and information as early as possible.

In conclusion, we stress to the Ministry that, while we understand that there is a phased approach being employed and that resources have been put in place to ensure that vulnerable populations receive their vaccines in a priority sequence, we would also appreciate that our district leaders be informed of procedural steps as soon as possible so that these can be shared with our employees and families.

Sincerely,

Kelly Allan

Kelly Allan, Chair,
Special Education Advisory Committee
Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

Jason Sweet

Jason Sweet, Vice-chair
Special Education Advisory Committee
Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

c.c. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health
Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Daryl Kramp, MPP Hastings-Lennox & Addington
Todd Smith, MPP Bay of Quinte
Lucille Kyle, Chair of the Board
Lee-Anne Kerr, Chair, Parent Involvement Committee
Chairs of all Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees