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To: Parents/Guardians

Re: COVID-19 Variants of Concern

Recently, new strains of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been identified. Some of these new strains are called variants of concern, because they spread more easily between people. Toronto Public Health (TPH) has identified individuals in some school settings who have tested positive for a variant of concern. This is not unexpected as there are variants of concern spreading in Toronto and across Ontario. TPH recently started updating daily case counts and information about variants of concern in Toronto, which is available [here](#).

As Toronto continues to experience increased cases of variants of concern, it is more important than ever to follow the steps of self-protection. Public health measures will work to prevent the spread of the variants, including:

- Limiting your contact to household members only, and staying at home as much as possible. Social gatherings and playdates outside of the school setting have led to the spread of COVID-19
- Going out only for essential outings such as medical appointments, food shopping, school, essential work, or for physical exercise.
- Keeping at least two metres (six feet) apart from others outside of your household.
- Wearing a mask.
- Cleaning your hands frequently, with soap and water for 15 seconds.
- Staying home if you are feeling unwell or if you have been told to self-isolate.

Public health measures in schools will also work to prevent the spread of variants of concern. To add protections for our school communities from these new variants TPH has made some important changes to the **school screening tool** for [staff and visitors](#) and [students JK-12](#). **Please make COVID-19 symptom screening part of your morning routine.** Everyone in your household must complete the screening before school every day.

Changes to the school screening tool include the following:

- **Household member has symptoms:** If anyone in your household has one or more COVID-19 symptoms, all children and adults who attend a school setting must stay home from school until COVID-19 has been ruled out with a test result. If the household

member with one or more symptoms does not go for testing, the children and adults in the home who attend a school setting must stay home for 14 days.

- **Household member has travelled:** If anyone in your household has travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days, all children and adults who attend a school setting must stay home from school until the person who travelled completes the federally-required 14 days of self-isolation. If the individual is exempt from this self-isolation because they perform an essential job (e.g. truck driver, pilot), the rest of the household can still attend school.
- **Close contact of someone who had COVID-19:** If anyone in your household is self-isolating at home because they were a close contact of someone who had COVID-19, all children in the household will need to stay home from school until the person who was a close contact completes the 14 days of self-isolation.

If students or staff/visitors have one or more new or worsening symptoms they must stay home, self-isolate and arrange to [get tested](#). Please see [Follow-Up Instructions for School Students, Staff and Visitors tested for COVID-19](#) for more information.

Thank you for all that you are doing to keep our schools and communities safe. Please continue to visit our website at: www.toronto.ca/COVID19 to stay up-to-date. Information specific to school communities is available at: [COVID-19 school information for parents & caregivers](#). If you have questions about COVID-19, please call our Hotline at 416-338-7600, Monday-Sunday 8:30 AM – 8:00 PM. Interpretation services are available. If you need immediate health care assistance, please call Telehealth Ontario 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-866-797-0000.

Sincerely,



Nicole Welch
Director
COVID-19 School Response Team
Chief Nursing Officer