

Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation

Deputy Minister

Sous-ministre

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2020: B19

Date: October 14, 2020

Memorandum to: Directors of Education

From: Stephen Lecce
Minister

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: **Student Transportation Funding for Enhanced Health and Safety Measures**

We are writing you today to provide updates and clarification regarding the student transportation funding for enhanced health and safety measures, previously communicated in memoranda 2020: B13 and 2020: B14. We understand there is confusion in the sector regarding the utilization of additional COVID-19 related funding this year. This memo is intended to firmly clear any misconceptions.

We recognize that school boards are facing unique student transportation challenges this school year as a result of COVID-19. Thank you for your tireless efforts in making sure that students have access to student transportation service in a manner that puts the health and safety of students and bus drivers at the very centre. We are happy to hear that today, 99% of Ontario's approximately 19,000 routes are operating to ensure students can get to school safely. This is proof of the collaborative work underway between school boards, consortia and their operators. The system is working to ensure our driving motivation and purpose; delivering students to and from school.

This year, to ensure enhanced health and safety measures in student transportation, the ministry announced a total of \$65.5 million, of which \$45.5M has been allocated to school

boards. The Ministry has released a transfer payment agreement (TPA) related to the student transportation funding enhancement. The TPA explicitly provides additional information including eligible expenses, the timeframe for expenses and reporting requirements. With the TPAs released, school boards now have all the allocation and administrative details to process and settle expense invoices received to-date that are deemed eligible as per the criteria noted in the TPA.

As articulated in the TPA, the government's expectation is that this funding be used for measures that address current needs:

- Running routes at less than full capacity to allow for physical distancing;
- Noon-hour or other new bus routes to allow for programmatic choices at the secondary level to allow for appropriate cohorting;
- Additional staffing and/or overtime related to enhanced cleaning on school purpose vehicles, where these costs are not already covered in the current agreements; and
- Equipment and auxiliary supplies that would support effective enhanced cleaning protocols, as well as PPE and cleaning supplies procured outside the centralized (MGCS supported) channels.

The ministry is requesting that all required decisions and agreements be put in place as soon as possible. The ministry will be following up to understand how each consortia is going to use the enhanced transportation funding for the eligible expense categories and the details of the agreements that have been put in place.

The ministry would like to reiterate that \$20 million has not been allocated to school boards and has been set aside for the costs associated with the PPE and cleaning supplies being provided through MGCS. The ministry is receiving and paying for invoices directly from MGCS at this time, drawing on this \$20M PPE holdback. Future PPE allocations and potential recovery mechanisms (if any) will be communicated in the future.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in ensuring our students have a safe journey to and from school.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lecce
Minister

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

c: Senior Business Officials
Student Transportation Consortia Managers