



July 30, 2020

Hello everybody,

I understand that the restart announcement came as quite a surprise to members. CUPE, along with other stakeholders, have been involved by providing input on the plan. The consultation involved all K-12 education stakeholders throughout the development process, and CUPE's concerns helped shape the plan that went forward. Unions have equal representation on the steering committee that is working on the September K-12 restart plan.

We know that members are nervous and fearful; we are in a pandemic—something we've never seen before. The restart plan allows for cohorts or learning groups of a maximum of 60 in elementary and middle schools and 120 in secondary schools. These numbers reflect the scientific and public health evidence that has led B.C. to be recognized as a leader in pandemic management and transmission control.

CUPE puts the health and safety of our members first, as well as the safety of students and staff, families and the public. The September restart plan recognizes the importance of education for children and also for our members' livelihoods. Many of B.C.'s most vulnerable kids remained in schools throughout April, May and June, thanks to our dedicated EAs and support staff who were able to make those environments safe and productive. While there were challenges experienced, those challenges were overcome and informed the development of the plan announced this week.

The design of the school day, learning group system, and overall return plan was developed with the advice and guidance of the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry. It has been her guidance and leadership that has made B.C. a leading jurisdiction in North America in terms of managing the pandemic, keeping transmissions low, and maintaining key services.

In terms of what CUPE and the K-12 Presidents Council have been seeking, there are several elements of the plan that are the direct result of CUPE's advocacy, including funding for increased daytime cleaning, and the provision of masks to anyone who requests them.

The return to school plan is just that, a plan. It will be adjusted and changed based on experience and new information as it rolls out, as well as on how the pandemic evolves. As we discuss implementation over the next few weeks, our focus will remain on keeping the environment safe for all members who

work directly with kids in schools, along with other CUPE members whose valuable work is key to the public school system.

CUPE and the K-12 Presidents Council 's advocacy continues each and every day as the plan evolves and is being implemented.

In safety and solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Warren Williams
K-12 Presidents Council President

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