

March 11, 2022

Dear school boards,

As discussed at the OPH/School Board meeting this week, the province is moving forward on lifting many of the public measures that were in place in schools, starting on March 21, 2022.

The monitoring indicators we have available at this time are indicating that the COVID-19 situation in Ottawa has been improving since the peak of Omicron in early January and is stable.

At this time, Ottawa Public Health is not planning to recommend further public health measures for Ottawa as provincial measures are lifted. We continue to actively monitor the situation in Ottawa.

OPH continues to strongly recommend mask use for people at risk for severe illness and for all to consider masking in indoor settings when physical distancing may be difficult as well as increasing ventilation in indoor spaces whenever possible.

With respect to the ability of local Medical Officers of Health to implement local measures in Ottawa or to mandate masks in provincially regulated school and childcare settings, there are limitations that would make it difficult to implement without the support of the province. Policies related to masking in schools are within the provincial government's purview. As such, should key indicators start trending upward in a concerning way, the best approach is for Ottawa Public Health to continue to work with Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Kieran Moore, to assess options which could be implemented in Ottawa if necessary.

As public health measures continue to be lifted, it will become increasingly important for individuals to assess their own level of risk, and the risk of those they live and interact with. We are shifting to a space where individuals and their families will need to choose how to, rather than be mandated, to best protect themselves. This will include the decision to wear a mask in indoor or shared spaces. To support individuals in assessing their risk and making the best decision for them and their families, Ottawa Public Health has launched a new webpage: [OttawaPublicHealth.ca/RiskReduction](https://OttawaPublicHealth.ca/RiskReduction). This new webpage provides important information to help you and your family assess your level of risk of severe outcomes and choose your layers of protection accordingly.

We appreciate your usual collaboration and look forward to continuing to work together as we step into this new chapter of the pandemic.

Sincerely,

Ottawa Public Health