



GREATER CHARLOTTETOWN AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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August 7, 2020

Dear Minister Trivers,

On behalf of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce and its 1000 members, I wish to share considerations associated with plans for Island students' return to school in the fall, notably as they relate to your contingency plans should an at-home learning model be initiated this school year.

The 'Welcome Back to School Plan' published on June 30, 2020, asked school authorities to create an operational plan that would see students return to the classroom with precautionary health measures in place. The Chamber appreciates the extensive effort put into delivering on this commitment, as announced on August 5, 2020, and the outlined guidelines to ensure a safe return for students and staff this fall, as well as the subsequent efforts of individual schools in creating customized operational plans. One question that has surfaced thus far from members regarding this plan is the suggestion of parents taking larger responsibility for their children's transportation needs and the impact this could have on the workplace.

The Chamber also acknowledges the June 'Welcome Back to School Plan' committed to developing a back-up plan to facilitate at-home learning with either limited or no access to schools. We appreciate that your primary goal is to see students and staff safely return to the school, however, we are cognizant a second wave of COVID-19 may result in no other choice but to return to an at-home learning model.

As the at-home learning contingency plan was not part of the August 5 return-to-school announcement, the Chamber assumes it is still the development stage. We request that in its development, the following at-home learning challenges experienced by members of our Island workforce this spring, be considered and rectified:

1. In cases where appropriate childcare was not available for students, employees were unable to return to their workplace, causing subsequent challenges of having to balance the demands of working-from-home with supporting their child(ren)'s learning needs.
2. When appropriate childcare was not available, some households had to make the difficult choice for one parent/guardian not to work in order to support their child(ren)'s learning needs.
3. In the event where parents/guardians were deemed essential workers, while childcare funding was made available, not all were able to find appropriate care to support their child(ren)'s learning needs.
4. All constraints above were particularly challenging in single-parent/guardian households.

The Chamber welcomes the opportunity to work with you, department staff, and the Chief Public Health Office to identify solutions to these challenges. Acknowledging the fluid nature of the times, we may in future, on behalf of our members raise further workforce concerns as the back-to-school plan comes into affect. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this letter further, we would be pleased to meet with you.

Sincerely,

Gerard M. Adams, CPA, CA, ICD.D
Interim CEO



CC: Hon. Dennis King, Premier
Hon. Matthew MacKay, Minister of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture
Bethany MacLeod, Deputy Minister, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning
Norbert Carpenter, Acting Director, Public Schools Branch
Pamala Williams, Chief of Staff
Adam Ross, Principal Secretary to the Premier
Dr. Heather Morrison, Chief Public Health Officer
Erin-McGrath Gaudet, Deputy Minister, Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture