

July 27, 2020

CUPE and safe school reopening

Ontario's Ministry of Education has yet to produce a coherent strategy for reopening schools safely in September and for keeping students safe throughout the school year. The Ministry issued recommendations for the measures needed to make schools as safe as possible for students and staff, but the funding allocated by the Ford government is woefully inadequate. To date, it has announced only \$10 million for mental health supports and \$15 million for technology related costs, which represent slightly less than 0.1% of the total Grants for Student Needs (GSN).

CUPE has used the lowest projected costs to arrive at an estimate of **\$589,330,762 – the amount needed** to fully fund safe school reopenings in Ontario, or **\$1.49 per student per day**. Funding a safe to return to school for students would require a **2.1% increase** in the 2020-21 GSN spending.

The Ontario Parents Action Network gives the Ford government's current planned expenditure **as 7¢ per child per day** for school reopenings.

CUPE's cost estimates were calculated based on :

- 4,800 schools in the province;
- 1,431,697 elementary students;
- 604,772 secondary students;
- 194 days in the school year;
- and
- an average of 25 classrooms per school;
- an average of 6 washrooms per school;
- an average of 1 library + 1 school office + 1 gym + 1 special use classrooms per school.

Summary of costs

1. Touch free hand sanitizer dispensers in each used room in school: range from \$1,392,000 to \$4,036,800.
2. Refill of hand sanitizer: ranging from \$66,816,000 to \$82,128,000.
3. Cost to install hand-sanitizer dispensers: \$1,920,000.
4. Plexiglass for school office and libraries: \$2,112,000.
5. One additional custodian per school: \$271,603,200.

6. Additional EA support: \$135,801,600.
7. Opening up currently closed school spaces: \$109,685,962. (Costs do not include costs associated with childcare centres located in schools or before- and after-school programs).

Estimate using lowest projections: \$589,330,762

(Detailed calculations available on request)

CUPE has based these costs on the needs identified by its members for:

- additional custodial support for enhanced cleaning (high touch surfaces, washrooms, playground equipment, etc.);
- additional supports for students with special education needs, including additional EA support to assist with “cohorting” and restricting contact between different classes;
- funding for hand sanitizer dispensers for every classroom and every school entrance, additional hand washing stations, and staffing to install and refill as necessary;
- funding for adequate PPE for staff (and students as required);
- professional and paraprofessional support to support additional classrooms;
- mental health and wellbeing supports for students and staff;
- plexiglass for school offices, libraries, and other staffed areas;
- opening school spaces not currently used for instruction to accommodate smaller class sizes (including additional support and cleaning);
- childcare and before- and after-school programming;
- additional requirements for student transportation.

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