



December 17, 2021

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Dear Educators, School Staff, Leaders and Trustees:

With the holidays just ahead, I would like to take a moment to express my deep gratitude to all of you for your hard work and dedication to the students and families across our province over the past year. Faced with a seemingly never-ending series of challenges, you have, as always, put the best interests of the students at the centre of your work.

Over the past 12 months, you have helped successfully navigate the COVID-19 pandemic so schools can remain open, as well as continue to be safe and vibrant places of learning for BC's youth. That is a testament to the outstanding work from you and your colleagues.

Throughout the year, you have also provided much-needed support in response to the series of extreme weather events, beginning with the heat wave and wildfires over the summer and followed by the heavy rains and catastrophic flooding that devastated parts of our communities in recent weeks. Schools are truly the centres of our communities and were able to provide relief and refuge. And each of you, no matter what your role, has helped provide the continuity and stability that our school communities need during these trying times; please know that your work is very important and is very much appreciated.

We know how important it is for children to stay connected to their schools for their intellectual development, and also for their social and emotional well-being. We remain committed to ensuring all students are able to learn and be fully supported. And with the arrival of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, we will continue to be vigilant.

I want to assure you that we are working closely with public health, led by the direction of the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control and will continue to do so over the winter break. We are closely monitoring the emerging evidence and impact of the Omicron variant in BC and will adapt as needed to ensure the on-going safety of students and staff.

Vaccination is the best way to protect our children and our communities. With the vaccination campaign underway for children aged 5–11, and with a rising vaccination rate among youth aged 12-17, we are all thankful for an additional layer of protection for our children and community.

As 2021 ends, I would like to wish you all the very best of the holiday season. Please take time for yourself and those you love. I wish for you all a restful and restorative break and that you are able to celebrate in ways that are safe and meaningful to you.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Whiteside  
Minister