



September 5, 2024

Dear Students, Parents, and Caregivers:

As the new school year begins, I would like to extend a warm welcome back to all students, parents, and guardians across the province. The start of a new academic year is always an exciting time, filled with new opportunities for learning, growth, and community. We are committed to ensuring that every student feels safe and supported to reach their full potential, and I want to thank you for your dedication and commitment to this shared goal.

As a parent, I am grateful to everyone who has worked to make sure students throughout the province can have the best education experience possible. With the largest investment in school food programs in our province's history, more students than ever now have access to healthy meals and snacks at school through the Feeding Futures initiative. To help make life more affordable for families we've added \$20 million to the Student and Family Affordability Fund, which helps cover the costs of school supplies, class trips, and extracurricular activities, ensuring that every child can fully participate in school life.

We are continuing to ensure schools remain safe places for students and staff, and this remains one of my top priorities. We have activated protected zones around school grounds to prevent disruptive behaviour, including aggressive protests and harassment. Additionally, our new cell phone policy for school districts aims to reduce distractions in the classroom, allowing students to focus on their education. Independent schools are encouraged to follow the Ministry's policy guidance and restrict cell phone use at school. While technology is a crucial part of our lives, fostering digital literacy and healthy tech habits is crucial for keeping our kids safe.

To better support students with disabilities and diverse abilities, we have launched two Provincial School Outreach Teams that provide specialized assistance to communities where access can be limited. Additionally, this year we will start to expand K-12 literacy screening and learning supports to help all students, particularly those with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, achieve their best in school and beyond.

With the highest enrolment growth in 35 years, the demand for teachers and staff is greater than ever. We are working with education partners to build a robust K-12 workforce that families can rely on now and in the future.

As the Minister of Education and Child Care, it has been a true privilege to witness the remarkable growth in our school communities over the past year. As we head into an exciting new school year, I look forward to seeing even more progress. To those starting their final year, I wish you every success as you prepare for graduation and beyond.

.../2

Thank you once again for your incredible efforts. Here's to a fantastic school year ahead!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Singh', with a horizontal line underneath the 'h'.

Rachna Singh
Minister