

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**LIBERALS UNVEIL FULLY COSTED PLAN TO BRING STUDENTS SAFELY BACK TO CLASSROOMS**

**TORONTO, ON** – Steven Del Duca, leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, today unveiled a fully-costed plan to get Ontario's students back into classrooms safely and in classrooms no larger than 15 students. His **Students in Schools Action Plan** calls for 14,000 new classroom locations, the hiring of 17,000 additional educators and 10,000 additional caretakers. These measures enable safe, physically-distanced learning, which is the first step in getting parents back to work and reopening the economy.

"Students and their parents have been waiting for far too long to hear what will happen in September," said Del Duca. "Living with this uncertainty has caused unnecessary anxiety during what has already been a stressful time. Getting our students back to school safely is what kids critically need for their own development and it's the only way their Moms and Dads can have peace of mind to return to work.

"Since the government hasn't unveiled a plan for the fall, I did," said Steven Del Duca. "Doug Ford should have made this a priority months ago by meaningfully consulting with school boards, teachers, education workers, principals and parents. He has not."

"We need students in classrooms and we know that while distance learning obviously needs vast improvement as a complement to future learning, the high quality and safe in-class experience needs to be front and centre in our plans for this Fall. It is the responsibility of the Premier to develop a plan to achieve this safely, including sufficient training and support."

"Reopening the economy without full day school in September puts families in impossible situations. It forces parents to choose between their children's education and their work. We have heard too many stories of parents - working mothers in particular - who have had to give up their careers because Doug Ford has yet to share a plan and won't help them with childcare."

"Ford's priorities are beer, bars and booze -- it's time to deliver on a better, stronger and safer public education for our kids."

"We need to ensure schools are a safe place to learn and a safe place to work. That's why my plan dramatically expands the number of classrooms and educators."

Del Duca's **Students in Schools Action Plan** will cost **\$3.2 billion\*** and will fund:

- 15,000 More Elementary Teachers to reduce class size to 15 **\$1.30 billion**
- 10,000 More Caretakers to keep elementary and secondary schools clean **\$500 million**
- 14,000 New Classrooms in Community Centres, Campuses, Arenas, etc. **\$200 million**

- 2,000 More Secondary Teachers to address pressures and help all students reach their full potential **\$170 million**
- School Transportation (Cleaning, Retrofits, Staggered Starts) **\$80 million**
- Sufficient Cleaning/Hygiene Supplies and Equipment **\$120 million**
- 1,500 Special Education Professionals to Help Close Learning Gaps **\$120 million**
- New equipment for students and educators (approx. 400,000 new devices) **\$200 million**
- Reverse PC Cuts to School Mental Health and hire 1,000 more Mental Health Professionals to support staff and students **\$75 million**
- Provincial Leadership in Centrally Procuring and Purchasing Personal Protective Equipment for Students and Staff (e.g., face shields, masks, gloves) **\$110 million**
- Support Parental Engagement and Communication **\$25 million**
- Public Health Coordination of Screening, Testing and Contact Tracing **N/A**
- Contingency (10%) **\$290 million**

\*This is a one-time funding plan for the 2020-21 school year, after which, a vaccine may likely be available. Regardless, the government should begin planning for 2021-22 as early as possible.

“The choice is between students in schools or the chaos that Doug Ford’s unclear approach will create. We need to make it safe for students to learn - it is the only way they will thrive, and it will enable their parents to go back to work,” concluded Del Duca.