

August 25, 2020

Honourable Zach Churchill, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development  
[educmin@novascotia.ca](mailto:educmin@novascotia.ca)

Dear Minister Churchill:

On behalf of the Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia (APNS) and our member Psychologists who work with children, adolescents and their parents, we would like to express our concern about the lack of consideration given to the effects that returning to school will have on the mental health of students.

Back to school is a stressful time for both parents and children. This year COVID has made it even more so. We commend the Nova Scotia government for providing such a detailed **Back to School Plan** that reflects Public Health guidelines to ensure the safety and physical health of students. However, on reviewing the plan, we find no information on dealing with the mental health of the students. Your list of the organizations that have been consulted is also impressive, however there are none who deal specifically with mental health and no mention of Psychology. Registered Psychologists, as you know, are ideally suited to provide treatments for students to help them deal with their fears and anxieties.

Many Psychologists are hearing from parents with concerns about increased, and sometimes extreme, stress and anxiety that may be fueled both by the uncertainty of the situation as well as avoidance, one of the major drivers of anxiety.

We would like to stress the importance of providing information tailored to parents and children, teachers, and administrators about fear and anxiety and appropriate treatments during the return to school process. We also encourage you to ensure that School Psychologists are included in the school teams to address these issues at the school level. Outside of the school environment many Private Practice and Public Sector Psychologists are available to treat fear and anxiety surrounding the return to school.

Please also see the following links which you may find useful:

- The School Foundation of Canada: [COVID-19: Resources to build our children's resilience](#)
- CPA has posted the Psychological Society of Ireland's: [The Relaunch – Back to School After COVID-19 Restrictions](#)
- APNS Referrals to Private Practice Psychologists: [Find A Psychologist](#)

I hope you will seriously consider our request, and add more information about mental health precautions and treatments as you roll out your **Back to School Plan** this September.

Sincerely



Carol M. Shirley, R. Psych., President, APNS

Copy: Deputy Minister Cathy Montreuil, Education and Early Childhood Development [cathy.montreuil@novascotia.ca](mailto:cathy.montreuil@novascotia.ca)  
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