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**MINISTER  
OF EDUCATION**

Room 168  
Legislative Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
R3C 0V8

December 22, 2021

TO: Superintendents of School Divisions  
Principals of Independent Schools

Dear Colleagues:

**Thank you to all who have helped ensure Manitoba schools are safe and open for in-class learning.**

As we begin the holiday break across Manitoba schools, the Government of Manitoba would like to thank students, teachers, school staff, school leaders, school divisions, parents and caregivers for ensuring schools have been safe and open for in-class learning since September 2021.

Public health and Education officials have recommended an extension to the school winter break by two days. This means students will return to the classroom on January 10, 2022. This extension will give public health officials more time to assess the effects of the omicron variant in Manitoba, and what changes might be needed for the return to school in early January.

We have all seen the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of our entire school community and we know that in-person learning, sports, arts and all of the amazing school experiences help to improve well-being. This year, teachers and school staff, including childcare providers, have done what they know best to support students and families throughout the pandemic and we thank them for continuing to do so. We thank you for your tireless efforts to support students.

The magnitude of this effort to ensure safety across our 800 schools cannot be understated and we express our sincere appreciation to principals, vice principals, administrators, boards and Manitoba Education staff who have demonstrated tireless leadership, dedication and commitment. Thank you also to all students, parents and caregivers for doing your part to follow the fundamentals like washing hands, staying home when sick and, most importantly, getting vaccinated. We have seen the

impact of vaccinations on our ability to keep schools safe and open with far fewer cases amongst those 12 and over. As we see the number of vaccinated students ages 5 to 11 continue to increase, it will help better protect our schools, especially as the omicron variant arrives in Manitoba.

Manitoba has invested \$63 million this school year to ensure that health and safety measures are in place and to support mental health and well-being, addressing the learning impacts as a result of the pandemic. Access to rapid testing for school staff and child care staff since last year and new testing requirements for over 1800 unvaccinated staff this year have served to add another layer of protection. More than 8,100 doses of the vaccine have been delivered at school-based clinics this year, so we extend a special thank you to the public health teams across all regional health authorities and Manitoba Health and Seniors Care for their efforts to vaccinate as many students as possible. We also want to thank them for their work over the past 21 months to ensure that transmission in the community has had as little impact on schools as possible.

We can all do our part as students head back to class in January by getting vaccinated, minimizing contacts over the holiday break, monitoring for symptoms, and of course, getting tested and staying home when sick.

In an effort to ensure we can keep schools open and a safe place for children to learn, we are providing rapid tests to students in kindergarten to Grade 6 as an additional tool to provide peace of mind to parents and caregivers. Test kits are being made available on a voluntary basis and will be distributed as students return to school.

Again, we extend our thanks to everyone for their efforts over the last several months. While we know the public health measures will change how we celebrate during the holiday season, we wish you all a well-deserved break. We appreciate your understanding and commit to sharing any additional information about the return to school once it is available.

Sincerely,



Cliff Cullen  
Minister  
Education