

October 15, 2020

[Signature Line]

Dear [Contact],

On behalf of the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (JCSH), I am pleased to advise you that the Ministries of Education and Health/Wellness in the 12 member provinces/territories support a new five-year mandate, the fourth since the Ministers of Education and Ministers of Health formed this government collaboration in 2005.

In these 15 years since JCSH was formed, the world and Canada have seen many changes: clearly, at this time, we all are working hard to manage the human and societal costs of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our children and youth also face increasing mental, environmental, and academic challenges, and school communities and public health strive to support them. In other ways, some challenges and opportunities remain: children and youth need the dedication of their families and communities, but also the professionals in the education and health sectors to champion their learning, physical, mental, and nutritional health needs.

In the five years since the last mandate renewal of JCSH in 2015, vaping has become a growing concern; cannabis was legalized for those 19 and older; teen suicides following online bullying have gripped all parts of the country; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has given Canadians 94 Calls to Action to begin to repair systemic harms to Indigenous peoples; Black Lives Matters protests have taken hold; children and youth have lead climate change protests; young people have joined adults in demanding respect and support for those of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Preparing for the 2020-2025 mandate, the JCSH Management Committee and School Health Coordinators’ Committee have taken the last year to revise the strategic directions of this government collaboration. They have set three areas of priorities, while at the same time recognizing that these may change quickly to respond to both crises and emerging trends. The priorities are as follow:

* **Mental well-being,** includingCOVID-19 crisis response, social-emotional learning, resiliency, anxiety, protective factors, and disruptive behaviors;
* **Problematic substance use,** with a strong initial focus on vaping;
* **School food environment,** including school food programs and the alignment of healthy eating school food policies and priorities.

These priorities remain grounded in JCSH’s commitment to the Comprehensive School Health Framework that underpins all the work we do to foster student well-being and achievement. This internationally recognized approach supports improvements in students’ educational outcomes while addressing school health in a planned, integrated, and holistic way. It has four distinct but inter-related components: Teaching and Learning, Social and Physical Environment, Partnerships and Services, and Policy.

The two tables of JCSH developed the priority areas above, mindful that they align with those of the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Health and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). It is the objective of JCSH in this mandate to more intentionally network with the Advisory Committee of the Deputy Ministers of Education (ACDME) and the Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Deputy Ministers of Health. To this end, we will reach out to those committees to begin discussions on areas of collaboration across our mutual priority areas.

We very much look forward to continuing to work with you and our Health and Education colleagues across the country in this successful model of cross-sector collaboration, advancing work on these strategic priority areas impacting the wellness and achievement of Canada’s school-aged children and youth.

Sincerely,

John Cummings
Chair, Management Committee
Joint Consortium for School Health