

President's Message

March 30, 2020

School Operations

This is a difficult time. Schools are closed, but we are still school leaders. We encourage you to be as responsive as possible to any requests from your board for assistance. Fill gaps if/where you can, while following safety guidelines and protocols around social/physical distancing. We are all in this together and we want to ensure we are working with our boards in the best interests of students.

Related to this, we've received questions from some of you about whether or not you should, or are required to, return to your school during this time to take care of any maintenance or operational issues. Please keep checking with your board, since they will be deciding whether this is an expectation or even permitted while schools are closed. Some boards have specifically instructed no one to return, even to pick up personal items. This may change as we hear more details about the e-learning initiative, as it may necessitate staff entering the building to pick up resources. Contact our PST staff if you have any questions.

Call with the Minister

Last week I had a call with the Minister to discuss the current situation. We talked about the options associated with online/eLearning for our students and the challenges many students and families will face given lack of software, hardware or internet access. His ministry is talking to school boards about ways they can mitigate some of these issues. The Minister is expected to make an announcement in the next couple of days regarding the rollout of the [Learn at Home](#) initiative and the pending date for when schools might re-open.

Weekly Zoom Meetings

Our PST Consultants have been meeting virtually every week with our Provincial Councillors through Zoom conference calls. The calls allow us to keep track of what is happening in boards across the province, connect our Councillors to each other for advice and support and hear from each district about concerns or questions arising in your boards during this time. If you have any specific concerns you would like shared, please pass them on to [your Councillor](#).

Last Friday, our Executive also met for an online meeting, and our work on your behalf continues during this time.

Additional Resources from Starling Minds

[Starling Minds](#) has added five new sessions to its Mental Fitness course to help you understand how the pandemic can increase your stress and anxiety, assist you in setting boundaries around managing the stream of information, help you set healthy goals to keep your life on track, provide strategies to manage anxiety or worrisome thoughts and connect you to our community

so you can share your experiences and learn from others. We encourage you to check out this resource if you are already a Starling Minds member, under My Workbook, or to [register as a new member](#) to take advantage of this and other resources.

Media

- [Make sure no student is left behind during closures](#)
- [Caremongering – finding the best in all of us](#)
- [Parenting during the pandemic](#)
- [Post COVID 19 classrooms – will keeping your distance become the new normal?](#)
- [Online learning may reshape the classroom](#)
- [School system still trying to figure out online learning](#)
- [Teachers adjust to instruction in a classroom-free world](#)
- [Parents share tales of fun and frustration on home schooling](#)

Queen's Park

Last week, the government was supposed to table the 2020-21 Provincial Budget. In light of the pandemic, it decided to postpone the Budget until the fall and instead release [a Fiscal Update](#). Due to the economic impact of the pandemic, the government predicts that the provincial deficit will increase to \$20.5 billion in 2020-21.

The update included a \$200 subsidy to parents to help cover costs associated with having children (under age 12) at home full-time; \$250 for parents of children with special needs; suspension of OSAP loan repayments until September 30; and funds for skills training programs for those who lost employment due to COVID-19.