



ONTARIO MUSIC EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION



Monday, March 15, 2021

Dear OMEA members,

With spring upon us and the promise of a better year ahead, it is a prudent time to give our members an update about the OMEA's work this winter. The OMEA, like many of our provincial counterparts have been advocating for the return to playing and singing with mitigations in place. It is very exciting news that the [Province of Manitoba has the go-ahead](#) to begin playing and singing in their K-12 schools with mitigations in place and we want to make sure you, as OMEA members, know that we have been advocating for the same provisions.

Date(s)	Action	Outcomes
October - present	Ongoing correspondence with a doctor at SickKids	The updated SickKids document from Jan 21, 2021 included a few more detailed, adaptable music recommendations
November - December	We reached out to 7 different Public Health Units (PHU) in Ontario to access a health professional partner.	Each time, the PHU told us they are taking their direction from the School Boards and the Ministry of Education since it is an educational policy we are inquiring about.
January 6, 2021	<p>The OMEA met (virtually) with the Ministry of Education (MoE). The OMEA presented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a scaffolded plan for the return to playing and singing, very similar to the current plan Manitoba is using. • a summary of the most current research (including the Colorado Study) • a list of what other provinces were doing in the country (at the time BC and Nova Scotia had returned to playing and singing) • information about the Social-Emotional Learning that was being lost by students in Ontario. 	The MoE deferred our questions and the plan to the Ministry of Health (MoH) since it contained health-related recommendations of a safe return to playing and singing which was based on scientific evidence. The MoE would pass on the information we presented to the Ministry of Health (MoH).
January 6 - March 10	The OMEA followed up with several communications as we anxiously awaited a response from the MoH about the plan for a return to playing and singing	The MoE forwarded the OMEA a response from the MoH effectively dismissing our draft recommendations as well as all of the current studies and evidence we presented at the meeting on January 6th. An excerpt from the MoH response is below for your reference.

COVID-19 Response Committee

March 10, 2022

Communication email from the Ministry of Health, via the Ministry of Education.

Firstly, thank you for your patience in receiving MOH's feedback on OMEA's Return to Playing and Singing Document (Jan 6). We apologize for the delay and appreciate your understanding throughout.

The Ministry of Health does not provide formal review or endorsement of third party resources. However, we have compiled general comments and references to the most relevant evidence we are aware of relating to COVID-19 and singing/wind instruments, summarized below.

Please note, the evidence in this area is very limited, and there appear to be many aspects of OMEA's draft resource that extend beyond the scope of available evidence. As such, we really

cannot provide further comment or assessment, as OMEA has not provided an evidence base to support the guidance proposed in this resource.

We would also caution that the emergence of variants of concern likely warrant a more cautious and rigorous application of IPAC measures at this time, particularly where evidence is lacking.

While The OMEA Covid Response committee has been hesitant to share our specific communications with our members until now for fear of breaking the tenuous bridges that have been built, we want to make sure that our members know that the OMEA continues to forge a way forward. This pandemic is not over and so a return to our regular classroom procedures is not upon us yet. However, the OMEA has been advocating for a return singing and playing with appropriate mitigations in place, much like our counterparts in other provinces have managed to successfully accomplish. With other provinces demonstrating a safe return to singing and playing, we hope the Ontario government may begin to see a way forward as well.

The OMEA will continue to pursue discussions with the government and health officials, and to propose a plan to move forward in our schools.

Sincerely,

**Carolyn Lewis
President, OMEA**

**Lynn Gracey
COVID-19 Response Chair, OMEA**

**OMEA Board Directors
COVID-19 Response Committee**