



EFF STATEMENT ON THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

Monday, 15 February 2021

The EFF notes with concern the state of readiness for the opening of schools across the country from 15 February 2021. This is after the department of basic education postponed the re-opening in January because of the second wave of Covid-19 infections. As things stand, South Africa is still battling with the second wave of the pandemic with Covid-19 infections steadily declining to around 2 338 daily infections and approximately 300 daily deaths.

Rather than a political push to reopen schools, the guide to reopen schools must be scientific and medical data-driven. It is important to also acknowledge that schools may potentially become super spreaders, thus risking the lives of thousands learners and teachers. Epidemiologists have advised that South Africa may have the third-wave of infections sooner than we think.

Under these circumstances, about 530 schools in Limpopo alone still do not have adequate water and sanitation and many more in other rural provinces. In the Eastern Cape, thousands of learners have to walk to attend schools with pit toilets. The department of basic education has not demonstrated that learners and teachers without adequate water and sanitation at their schools will have a fair chance of protecting themselves against the virus.

The insistence by the department of basic education and Minister Motshekga's for contact learning to restart on the backdrop of inadequate sanitation infrastructure in public schools is to mask a fundamental failure of basic education. It demonstrates that the department has not met its own minimum standards in terms of infrastructure, water and sanitation. More importantly, the majority of public schools have no online facilities to allow for learners to learn from the comfort of their homes whilst independent/private schools have been able to teach and learn remotely.

The EFF demands that basic education ensures that all schools in the country have adequate and permanent sanitation and water infrastructure in order for educators and learners to sufficiently protect themselves from Covid-19.

ISSUED BY THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS

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