

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Pandemic Response Failing Schools

SASKATOON – The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is disappointed that the Government of Saskatchewan's vaccine rollout plan does not include any priority access for teachers and school staff.

"For the last year, the pandemic response in schools has been disjointed and reactionary," said STF President Patrick Maze. "If keeping schools open truly is a priority, we must do a better job of managing the response and protecting our students and schools."

The Federation is calling on the government and school boards to:

- Provide information on how response plans will address new, more contagious variants of COVID-19;
- Gather and make available reliable data on in-school transmission and case rates; and
- Implement rapid widespread testing of school communities to improve detection of asymptomatic students.

"Government and school boards' statements that schools are safe are nothing more than wishful thinking – we simply don't have the data to know," said Maze. "The province has access to rapid response kits; I encourage school boards to access these kits and implement widespread testing to ensure their response plans are based on data."

Saskatchewan continues to have among the highest rate of cases and deaths per capita in the country. Maze points to this as confirmation that more can and should be done.

"At this point, our confidence in the response is low. Higher community transmission reduces the safety of schools," said Maze. "This pandemic isn't over yet, and there doesn't seem to be a clear, consistent plan to keep students, teachers and staff safe. Providing priority vaccine access to adults working in schools would go a long way to increasing the confidence of teachers and all school staff who want to be vaccinated."

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