

NEWS RELEASE

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STF Urges Further Protections for Schools

SASKATOON – The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is deeply concerned that the Government of Saskatchewan has failed to introduce enhanced protections for schools to address the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19.

“In the first days back from the holiday break, I am already hearing from teachers about staffing issues due to self-isolation requirements and COVID-19 exposures in schools,” said STF President Patrick Maze. “Staffing shortages affect a school’s ability to ensure a safe learning environment for students, and also impacts the ability to cohort students in different classrooms. Multiple student cohorts may be moved into a single classroom to address staff shortages, which causes many challenges when trying to mitigate the spread of a highly transmissible virus.”

The Federation is calling for the urgent implementation of additional protections, including:

- N95 masks provided for all staff and students;
- The immediate reinstatement of the Education Sector Response Planning Team;
- Mandatory masks and proof of vaccination for all activities, including extracurricular;
- Cohorting of students in schools where that is not occurring;
- Updated definition of “fully vaccinated” to include booster shots; and
- Vaccine eligibility for all students turning 5 this year (born in 2017).

“Other provinces have taken action to respond to the significant impacts they have seen in their communities and hospitals,” said Maze. “We need to take action here in Saskatchewan now, before our situation becomes dire. The Government of Saskatchewan has not shared a plan for how we will protect our education system, health system, or economy if Saskatchewan’s Omicron wave worsens as it has elsewhere. Teachers, principals, vice-principals, other school staff and boards are doing an incredible job of weathering this ongoing storm, but our government seems to have learned nothing from the failures that made the recent wave of the Delta variant so challenging.”

The additional protections being called for by the STF would significantly increase safety for students and staff through this Omicron wave and ensure minimal disruptions to the ever critical in class learning our members provide for students every day.

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