



## Message from NLTA President Dean Ingram re K-12 Education Announcement

July 5, 2020

Dear Colleagues;

As you may be aware, the provincial government announced in a media advisory released at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, July 3 that it would be releasing its K-12 Education Re-entry Plan on Monday at 12:30 p.m. The NLTA was advised of the planned announcement just minutes prior to its release. As reported previously to members, the NLTA has participated in meetings with government and school district officials regarding planning for September 2020. We have used these meetings and taken every opportunity to raise the concerns of teachers and administrators, to ask questions, seek clarification, and to provide feedback on education and public health plans from other jurisdictions that our government has been considering.

**Your Association's positions in these discussions have been informed by the thousands of emails and other contacts received from individual members (since March 15, the NLTA has received 31,188 emails, all of which have received a response). In addition, NLTA has relied upon the specific experiences and expertise of our various Special Interest Councils to bring forward their concerns and suggestions.**

Our meetings with government have been cordial and government officials have given every indication of being open to NLTA concerns, comments and suggestions. That being said, it is important for all members to understand that your Association was not provided with a draft version of the government's K-12 Education Re-Entry Plan to provide feedback. When notified of the planned announcement late on Friday afternoon, we made it very clear that **NLTA would not endorse or support a written plan upon which we have had no opportunity to provide feedback.**

Throughout these discussions with government, your Association has been firm that all planning must respect:

- The need for safe teaching and learning environments;
- Collective agreement provisions;
- The professional judgement of teachers and administrators;
- Workload concerns;
- The principle that no member should be economically disadvantaged due to a suspension of in-school classes.

Much of what can be managed in the K-12 education system during any COVID-19 Alert Level will be determined by public health directives and guidance. Appreciating this, your Association requested a meeting with Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, Chief Medical Officer of Health, to get firsthand information and to provide her with the benefit of teachers' expertise, experience and perspective on the practical reality of school operations. The NLTA requested this meeting three weeks ago and has yet to receive a response. Now that Government has a Re-Entry Plan to announce, I will be following up with Dr. Fitzgerald first thing Monday morning, emphasizing the urgency of this meeting.

In our discussions with EECD and school district representatives, your Association has raised many issues and concerns that need to be considered in any plans based on public health directions, including but not limited to the following:

- The impact of physical distancing requirements on class size, bussing, supervision and cohorting;
- The availability and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), including face masks, gloves, face shields, and hand sanitizer;
- The availability of computer equipment, devices, connectivity, resources and supports for home instruction if required;
- Assurance of personal security and privacy during distance learning;
- The availability of paid leave when teachers are unable to attend at school or work from home due to public health directives;
- Adequate preparation time if learning is to occur via a combination of in school and online instruction;
- The availability of childcare for teachers and administrators if schools are required to operate on a shift system for in-class instruction;
- Clarification on possible modifications and adjustments to curriculum outcomes;
- The potential impact on specialist programs and itinerant teachers;
- The need to avoid implementing extra-curricular activities;
- The provision of adequate professional learning opportunities on the delivery of distance education;
- The need for additional supports for students with exceptionalities and challenging needs;
- The need for direction for administrators and teachers faced with symptomatic students;
- Clarification on hand-hygiene routines and provision of adequate supplies of hand sanitizer, soap and hot water facilities;
- Clarification on school cleaning protocols, including frequency of cleaning washrooms, frequently touched surfaces including desks, equipment and manipulatives, etc.;
- Provision of health and safety training and orientation for teachers and administrators;
- The need for an orientation period at the beginning of the school year with small groups of students;
- Clarification on screening protocols for students and staff;
- The need for additional supports for the social-emotional well-being of students;
- The need for restrictions on visitor access to schools;
- The need for availability of substitute teachers to avoid disruptions; and
- The need for flexible expectations regarding the phased in implementation of the draft Responsive Teaching and Learning Policy.

The NLTA will be reviewing the K-12 Education Re-Entry Plan to assess the degree to which government has taken into account the concerns we have raised to date. Likewise, your Association will consider any potential negative impact of the Plan on collective agreement rights and teacher/administrator workload.

The NLTA does not control the timing of government or school board announcements. Repeatedly, the Association has asked that decisions which impact the health, safety and working conditions of teachers and administrators be provided to NLTA members in advance of being made public. This would signal a more respectful relationship between employees and government.

I continue my commitment to keeping you informed as new information becomes available and will provide a detailed response to whatever is announced tomorrow. I wish to remind all members that government has historically looked for evidence of membership dissension in all public sector unions as this can be effectively used as a rationale for dismissing legitimate concerns raised by NLTA on behalf of members. It is more important now than ever that we are seen to be standing together in solidarity.

Thank you again for your professionalism and hard work during these challenging times. Take care, and stay safe.

Sincerely,

Dean Ingram  
NLTA President

Further information can be found here:  
[COVID-19 Information and Updates](#)