

For Immediate Release

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NLTA QUESTIONS WHY SCHOOLS REMAIN OPEN IN HARBOUR BRETON WHEN PUBLIC HEALTH IS UNSURE OF COVID COMMUNITY SPREAD

St. John's, NL... The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association is once again pointing out the disparity between the Public Health standards in place for students and teachers as compared to other public services, workplaces and community spaces.

"The recent cases in Harbour Breton are a clear example," said Dean Ingram, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. "Central Health issued a public service announcement on December 9, encouraging all residents of Harbour Breton, whether symptomatic or not, to contact 811 and arrange for COVID-19 testing. Community members were further advised to follow Public Health measures, including wearing masks and to stay home as much as possible and avoid holding gatherings. At the same time, schools remain open with little physical distancing and weak or no mask requirements."

Since the release of the Provincial Government's K-12 Education Re-entry Plan in early July, the NLTA has been raising concerns that Public Health precautions for students, teachers and other educational workers are far lower than the expectations in place for the rest of the community. The NLTA has consistently called for mandatory masks and greater physical distancing in schools.

"Schools are where all of the bubbles in our communities come together. In order to ensure safe communities, government should want to ensure safe schools," said President Ingram. "A poorly ventilated classroom with 25-30 students without masks for extended periods of time should not be the standard."

Dean Ingram has requested that when there is evidence of possible community spread with no confirmation of source, out of an abundance of caution schools should be closed.

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