

For Immediate Release  
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## **NLTA QUESTIONING PUBLIC HEALTH DOUBLE STANDARD FOR TEACHERS**

St. John's...The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association is once again highlighting the double standard that exists for educators in this province when it comes to COVID-19 related public health measures.

"The Chief Medical Officer of Health recently moved a large part of the central region of the province to Alert Level 4, expanding the area affected this morning, and it was announced shortly afterwards by the NLESD that schools in these communities would see in-class instruction suspended for at least two days. However, it is our understanding that teachers will still be required to report to school buildings in person for work to deliver online instruction. This despite the increased public health precautions that come with Alert Level 4, including a clearly stated 'responsibility' to 'work from home where possible,'" said Dean Ingram, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. "We struggled to understand a similar decision during the much smaller outbreak recently on the west coast. This time, in person classes are suspended for 36 schools, and teachers are expected to disregard government established responsibilities for individuals living in areas under Alert Level 4, leaving their homes unnecessarily when they could easily provide instruction to students while working from home. Why would the employer not be encouraging and supporting its employees to comply with public health measures?"

The NLTA has consistently called for public health measures in schools that are in keeping with those in place for the community in general, and continues to question these inconsistencies and the effectiveness of student cohorting. "However, at the very least, we should be strictly following the public health measures that are in place," said President Ingram. "Dr. Fitzgerald clearly stated in this morning's briefing that people should work from home, where possible, during Alert Level 4. She also expressed that we had 'a bit of luck' with some area schools being closed for teacher professional learning last week, as this helped to avoid further spread. Clearly then, transmission of COVID-19 is impacted by school interactions."

The NLTA has repeatedly stressed the importance of keeping schools safe in order to keep our communities safe. Government must reconsider how it implements public health measures in schools, including students and staff spending extended periods of time in close quarters, with little physical distancing and poor ventilation.

"All residents of the province, including those who work in our schools, should be encouraged and supported in complying with the public health precautions in place for the various Alert Levels, especially given the presence of more easily transmissible variants of concern," said President Ingram. "When teaching and learning is occurring online, teachers should, in keeping with the responsibilities established for Alert Level 4, have the option and be encouraged to work from home when they have the means and ability to do so."

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