

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **NLTA CONTINUES TO URGE CAUTION AS COVID-19 FOURTH WAVE HITS NL**

St. John's...The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association still calls for an abundance of caution in government and Public Health decisions for schools as Newfoundland and Labrador is experiencing a fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Public Health has stated the fourth wave is here, with confirmed community spread in areas in the central region of the province, including a reported 22 cases potentially in school-aged (under 20 years) individuals since Friday," said Trent Langdon, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. "As we have said since the Return to School Plan was first released in mid-August, this is still a time for caution if our collective goal is truly to keep schools open for in-person learning as much as possible. Protocols that have worked to keep our schools safe should remain in effect – we should not wait for a cluster or outbreak to occur. My thoughts are with all people impacted by this new surge in cases; the continued health and safety of our students and their families, our school staff and our communities demands a cautious approach. Does the timing of the recent increase in COVID-19 infections, in communities and connected to schools, tell us that masking requirements were relaxed too soon? Should non-essential access to and use of schools be allowed, with the Delta variant in our midst? Why have we not maintained enhanced cleaning protocols, distancing, and reduced bussing capacities? We support the reinstatement of required masking for schools and communities, and the decision to pivot to online learning at New World Island Academy. Let's now look at strengthening precautions to increase our chances of avoiding this type of disruption for other schools."

The NLTA has called for a more cautious approach to school reopening from the outset. The Association is pleased to see some precautionary measures resuming and trusts that this indicates Public Health guidance and requirements for schools will be erring on the side of caution. Greater clarity, in general and not only in the event of a positive case, on how close contacts in the school setting are identified and the rationale for self-isolation rules would also be welcome.

"Throughout the pandemic, Public Health officials have repeated the mantra that the best way to keep our schools safe is to keep our communities safe," said President Langdon. "Schools are indeed the places where all of our families, workplaces and community interactions come together. It is our desire that all members of our school communities will feel confident placing their trust in the guidance and information from our dedicated Public Health officials. What is predictable, is preventable, and schools should not be the weak link in our COVID-19 defences."