

**For Immediate Release**

January 17, 2022

## **NLTA ADVOCATING FOR APPROPRIATE MEASURES IN ADVANCE OF A RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING**

St. John's... The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association continues to advocate for a cautious approach, including implementation of all necessary measures to ensure any return to in-person learning is safe and sustainable for students and school staff. Making this move prematurely, without proper precautions and protocols in place to address safety and operational realities, would only serve to further disrupt learning for students.

"The NLTA agrees that in-person schooling is the goal, but not at all costs," said Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association President Trent Langdon. "Decision makers need to take into account the pandemic context in the province and have robust safety measures in place so that when in-person classes do resume for the majority of students, we can be confident the precautions in place are up to the omicron challenge. The use of rapid tests is one addition to the tool kit and we encourage students and families to do their part in this regard. But, rapid testing alone will not ensure a safe and sustainable school re-entry. The Association is still calling for a solid plan for school community contact tracing and notifications given the number and nature of close interactions that students and staff have in the run of a school day."

The NLTA is also seeking well-defined risk assessment protocols to assess and determine staff PPE needs, which is an ongoing concern for the special services teachers and administrators who have been working in person with certain students since January 4. Clear restrictions on non-essential, in-person attendance at and access to school buildings, including extra-curricular activities, are also important.

"NLTA members have once again stepped up and met the challenges associated with another pivot to online learning for most, with some teachers and administrators working in schools to support students with the highest needs," said President Langdon. "When in-person classes resume for the majority of students, teachers need to know that safety for our children and school staff are the primary focus, and that the necessary time and supports for a smooth transition will be provided."

The NLTA remains concerned by the operational challenges that schools have seen during the omicron wave and will likely continue to experience if in-person classes resume too soon. The move to online learning has provided continuity of instruction as opposed to continued disruption due to student and staff absences, exacerbated by teacher recruitment issues and a short supply of substitute teachers.

"We should not be tied to an arbitrary date for the resumption of in-person classes, and I am not yet convinced that January 24 is the right time," added President Langdon. "All of the relevant factors need to be considered, including the COVID-19 circumstances in our province and the system must be prepared and able to effectively implement the measures and precautions required to provide a safe learning and working environment and sustainable return to in-person learning."

- 30 -

**For further information contact:**

Jennifer Tulk, NLTA Communications; 682-3751; [jtulk@nlta.nl.ca](mailto:jtulk@nlta.nl.ca)