

For Immediate Release

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## **MAJORITY OF NL TEACHERS FEEL IN-PERSON LEARNING IS NOT SAFE RIGHT NOW**

St. John's...Of the 4,657 NLTA members who responded to a recent Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association survey, 84% feel the current plan to return to in-person classes for all students on January 25 is not the right choice. 89% of those surveyed do not feel the current return to school plan adequately protects the safety of educators, students or their families.

"The message from the province's teachers is clear – now is not the time to return to in-person classes," said Trent Langdon, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. "The response to our survey was overwhelming in a very short period of time. Our members want their voices heard and feel strongly that a return to in-person classes right now will lead to disruptions in learning due to operational issues. We have been hearing steadily from members about the number of teachers and other school staff who will be unable to report to work tomorrow; they have concerns about how Public Health measures intended to protect them and students from COVID-19 can be complied with in these circumstances. We once again call on government to reconsider this decision and err on the side of caution. The last thing we want is further spread of COVID-19 among students, staff and their families."

The Association also asked members what safety protocols and precautions should be in place to ensure schools can remain safe and operational once in-person learning resumes. 83% of respondents said contact tracing and notification of COVID-19 cases in schools is needed; 76% call for stronger enforcement of student masking; 76% said a reduction in class size is required to allow for physical distancing; 70% want non-essential access to school buildings limited or eliminated; and, 70% feel that medical grade N95 or KN95 masks should be available for all students and staff.

"NLTA members want to be back in the classroom with their students, but only when it is safe to do so," said President Langdon. "We have serious questions, and believe that parents and families do as well, about the safety of a return to in-person classes and the revised Public Health Guidance document that was just released on the weekend. Critical issues that require clarification include: the elimination of contact tracing and notifications for schools; relaxing close contact criteria and isolation requirements in relation to school attendance; clear risk assessment and PPE protocols; the misplaced reliance on cohorting; and the 'honour system' approach to screening, rapid testing and close contact notifications – just to name a few. It is alarming that government has decided it is safe to bring all students back to school in person with these matters still outstanding."

The survey results can be found [HERE](#).

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