

**Email message to members April 20, 2021**

**Subject: COVID 19 Update**

***Please see below. Sent on behalf of Paul Wozney, NSTU President.  
This will be forwarded to NSTU members with NSTU webmail accounts.***

Dear NSTU sibling,

Just want to highlight our concern with the recent COVID-19 cases announced in our schools. The health and well-being of you, your students and your families remain our top priority. While we've been fortunate to have maintained in-person learning since September inside our provincial bubble, we have seen in other jurisdictions how quickly the situation can escalate.

Schools are not immune from COVID-19, and if we don't do everything possible to keep the virus out of schools it could negatively impact communities. This is especially true with the emergence of more contagious variants. We continue to push government, public health and education entities to take a more robust approach.

Currently, we are requesting that school COVID-19 protocols be re-evaluated immediately to ensure they are effective at preventing the spread of new variants. This would include increased masking guidelines, reduced class sizes, and vaccine prioritization for teachers and school staff. With the current teacher shortage, it's imperative we have healthy teachers available to teach regardless of whether classes are held remotely or in-person.

Yesterday, South Woodside Elementary in Dartmouth and St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay Elementary in Halifax were closed for contact tracing and an extra day of cleaning. Tomorrow, Dartmouth South and Auburn Drive High School are expected to be closed for contact tracing and an extra day of cleaning. We are pleased HRCE took this step and are also encouraged that public health is requesting all students and staff at those schools be tested immediately. Those who have tested positive and their close contacts as identified (and notified) by public health will need to self-isolate for 14 days and complete several tests before they can return.

After the closures, teachers will return to their classrooms to teach remotely for at least two days. The HRCE will provide an update to families about when in-person learning can resume. This decision will be based on advice from public health.

All of you have gone above and beyond, for the past eight months to protect students and ensure they have a positive learning experience. Your efforts cannot be taken for granted. While we hope cases remain low, we are actively monitoring the situation. We expect government and all education entities to prioritize safety, by acting in a proactive manner to stop the spread.

Thank you again for your tremendous work on behalf of your students, school staff colleagues and your community.

Please continue to follow all public health guidelines and stay safe. If you have any additional concerns please contact your Executive staff officer.

Wishing you continued safety and health. All my best.  
Paul