

news



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N O V A S C O T I A T E A C H E R S U N I O N

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Full and transparent review of school COVID-19 cases required

(Halifax, NS) With schools now reopening, it's critical the province allow for a full and transparent review of school COVID-19 cases says the NSTU. Given the hundreds of school aged children that tested positive for COVID in late April and early May, and the sheer volume of schools impacted, a vague number in a talking point is not sufficient to assure families that schools were not a source of community transmission less than a month ago.

Just two weeks ago, on May 14, the IWK reported that 850 children had tested positive for COVID-19 during the third wave and many had been admitted to hospital. Case numbers were rising so quickly in children that health officials had been unable to inform more than 100 families about positive test results. In spite of these numbers and without a formal review, the province declared on Friday that the virus doesn't easily spread in schools and that they would reopen to in-person learning in June without extra safety precautions.

"I'm aware of teachers, students and staff who caught COVID-19 at school and brought it home to their families. There are also media reports describing the same," says NSTU President Paul Wozney. "These people endured trauma at the time and many still haven't recovered physically or emotionally from the experience."

While case numbers have been declining steadily in Nova Scotia, there is still community spread in some areas. Teachers have not been fully vaccinated and the majority of students have not received, or are not eligible to receive, a first dose. Wozney says that before the political decision was made to reopen schools, the province should have properly evaluated the factors that caused so many students, teachers and families to fall ill just weeks ago.

"A lot of people were exposed to COVID-19 inside schools in late April at a time when the government was making daily announcements aimed at reassuring families that schools were safe," says Wozney. "The hundreds of people who got sick, and the thousands of families that were forced into quarantine deserve transparency and accountability before they are forced to revisit the experience again."

The NSTU has concerns about the lack of consultation that occurred as government reversed its decision on Friday regarding the reopening of schools. “Teachers are feeling disrespected once again and are left with many unanswered questions. The consequence is that they are unsure if more changes will be announced suddenly, and how best to prepare for their student’s learning.”

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