



For Immediate Release

November 20, 2020

School District No. 57 (Prince George) has provided the following comments in response to the November 19, 2020 Order issued by the Public Health Officer regarding the province-wide restrictions related to COVID 19:

- It appears that our Provincial Health Officer is focusing on higher risk activities in our communities which supports keeping our schools healthy
- Evidence is that schools are 4x safer than our general communities with only 540 out of over 22,000 cases in our province being connected to a school
- Schools are rarely seen to be environments of transmission
 - Typically, a positive test arises from transmission in homes or in communities and then provides a potential risk if that individual attends the school site
 - Only 12 cases out of almost 23,000 in the province have resulted from an exposure at school (0.05%).
 - individuals are much more likely to acquire COVID outside the school through their social networks than in school
 - School is the safest place for children, youth and staff to be
- Masks are mandatory in our secondary schools
 - You cannot enter any of our secondary schools without wearing a mask, you cannot walk the halls or congregate in common areas without a mask
 - There are structured times during the school day where students may have the opportunity to be mask free if they choose to be
- Masks are required in certain situations in our elementary schools and are optional at other times
- There is no best way to protect yourself
 - There are many layers of protection and for schools, it is important that anyone with symptoms stays home and that everyone in our schools follow the strict cleaning and hygiene protocols

Board Chair, Trent Derrick indicates that, 'As a board we have to ask ourselves what problem we are trying to fix in schools? There is abundant evidence that schools are safe. Students and staff within schools are safe. It is clear our health authority approved safety plans and protocols are working.'

Superintendent Richardson commented that 'Children and youth have been disproportionately impacted by the controls the province has put in place. Their mental health is a serious concern and it is important that schools remain safe and open in order to maintain some sense of normalcy.' She went on to say that, 'she is pleased that the BC Government is researching the impacts COVID 19 is having on the mental health of not only our youth but our communities.'

The Board Chair concluded by stating, 'The cleaning and hygiene protocols we have in place in our schools work. As mentioned earlier, there is very limited evidence across the province that schools have been a source of transmission as a result of the health and safety protocols we strictly follow.'

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