

April 8, 2021

## **Teachers in Fraser Health region call for aggressive measures to combat third wave of COVID-19**

Today, Presidents of the 12 local unions representing K–12 public school teachers in the Fraser Health region released the following statement:

We, the undersigned, are calling on Fraser Health to implement more aggressive measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 in the Fraser Health region, particularly with the increasing prevalence of variants of concern in our region. It is very concerning that BC is now identified by epidemiologists around the world as a ‘hotspot’ for the P1 variant.

Our requests are as follows:

### **1. Change to pandemic phase for safety**

We are asking that at this time a region-specific phase change to at least Stage 3, to allow for blended in-person and online learning. It is critical that we support our students and their family with health and safety measures that keep them safe at this time.

Timing is of the essence for this action, as secondary schools will change learning groups in a few weeks and hundreds of thousands of kids will be switching cohorts. This poses a substantial increased risk for transmission in schools. The quarter turn around is an opportune moment to implement a phase change to keep our students, their families and staff safe.

### **2. Masks mandated in K–3**

We ask that the mask mandate be extended to include students in Kindergarten to Grade 3. Increased layers of protection must be made available to everyone, even our youngest. Primary teachers’ school days include close contact with their young students who may not understand the reasons behind why they should limit physical contact. In other community interactions, children as young as 2 must wear a mask, so this should not be a problem for 5–8 year olds to do the same while attending school.

### **3. Update on teacher vaccination progress**

We also request more information on the status of teacher vaccinations as essential workers. Surrey teachers have been mostly vaccinated, but we hope the rest of our Fraser Health region teachers will be on track to receive full vaccination as soon as possible.

All along, health officials have assured British Columbians that they will adapt as they learn more about the pandemic and identify problem areas. With the spreading of much more contagious variants, it is time to adapt and take more aggressive measures to fight COVID-19 in our school communities.

As Local Presidents, we are committed to working with school district and health authority officials to get this important work done.

In solidarity,

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**For more information** or to request an interview, please contact any Local President listed above.