

Media Release



THU Comments on Schools Re-Opening **January 11, 2021** - for immediate release

The Timiskaming Health Unit has received lots of interest and concerns about schools re-opening, and it's understandable that this is a challenging issue for families. School re-opening during lockdown is a provincial decision.

A January 7 media release by the province identified two factors in reopening schools in northern Ontario: Northern Ontario students are not able to learn at home as effectively due to limited access to reliable Internet service, and provincial targeted testing done among students and staff in December 2020 confirmed that schools are not a significant source of transmission. The full provincial media release is available [here](#).

"We are seeing a few other northern Health Units close schools in select communities with high rates of local transmission", said Dr. Glenn Corneil, Acting Medical Officer of Health and CEO for the Timiskaming Health Unit. "At this time, our district's case numbers do not support closing schools. We are closely following our numbers. If the situation in our district changes, we will take appropriate action."

Individual families may make their own decisions about whether to send their children to school. See your school board's website for more information, including change dates. The health unit's schools team works with partners in education for a safe return to school. Daily screening, wearing of masks where appropriate, cohorting of students, proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette all contribute to preventing the spread of COVID-19 in schools. Families should continue to use the Screening Tool for Children in School and Child Care every morning, and children should not take the bus or go to school if the screening tool indicates that they should stay home.

"Our district's COVID-19 case numbers are trending in the right direction at this time," said Dr. Corneil. "Our second wave arrived earlier than in other northern Health Units. Following a surge in cases in December, residents did their part to help stop the spread of COVID-19, and we all need to continue following public health measures. As we've seen, the situation can change extremely quickly. If you develop symptoms, stay home and reach out to your local assessment centre for testing."

The province of Ontario is currently in lockdown. District residents need to stay home except for essential travel, including travel to school, and especially need to avoid social gatherings. Residents are reminded to:

- Continue practicing physical distancing
- Wear a mask or face covering in public indoor spaces
- Wash hands with warm water or use alcohol based sanitizers and do not touch your face
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow
- Avoid gatherings with people outside of your household, they are prohibited under lockdown
- Avoid non-essential travel within and outside of our district, especially to high transmission areas
- Stay home if unwell and contact your local Assessment Centre (AC) to schedule an appointment for testing
- Respect public health and any additional safety measures businesses have put in place
- Reach out to vulnerable people in your community who may need support

For more information on COVID-19, please go to our website [page](#) or visit the Ontario's [website](#).

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