



Greater Victoria Teachers' Association

965 Alston Street Victoria BC V9A 3S5
t. 250.595.0181 f. 250.595.0189 info@gvta.net gvta.net

Via email

January 13, 2021

Shelley Green
Superintendent of Schools
Greater Victoria School District No. 61
556 Boleskine Road
Victoria BC V8Z 1E8

Dear Ms. Green,

RE: GVTA Calls on District to Improve Health and Safety Measures in Schools

Since the Spring, the GVTA has outlined to the employer a number Health and Safety Measures that should be implemented in schools to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Some concerns relate to the implementation of the guidance and requirements in the Ministry K-12, the BCCDC and the WorkSafeBC K-12 documents. An example is the ongoing issue of meetings being held in-person when virtual meetings are possible and safer.

The Association also sees opportunities for SD61 to take a lead on safety measures that supplement the provincial documents, specifically in terms of an enhanced masks policy, disinfecting protocols, and the distribution of transparent barriers. The GVTA calls on the Greater Victoria School District to immediately implement these changes to improve Health and Safety across the Greater Victoria schools.

The GVTA urges the Greater Victoria School District to implement a policy that all students and staff be required to wear non-medical masks when physical distancing is not possible in all places in schools, with exemptions for those who are unable to do so. The GVTA believes, in light of the new COVID variant on the island, and the alarming increase in cases province wide, the employer should take bold action and implement a policy for all students and staff to ensure the safety of its employees and large student body.

GVTA members should not be responsible for disinfecting toys, manipulatives, and other shared supplies in the classroom. GVTA members are responsible for children's learning and should not have to spend hours after school on a daily basis disinfecting these materials. Without clarity on whom has responsibility, the required protocols are not being implemented consistently. These duties should be handled by support staff in schools. The GVTA calls on the employer to

clarify the implementation process and responsibilities for disinfecting and cleaning, and to provide additional custodial staffing if required.

Transparent barriers should be available for all staff who cannot maintain physical distancing, regardless of whether the person works in a single or multiple cohorts. The cost of these barriers should be covered by the district rather than charged to schools. At the start of this school year, the employer made it clear to the union that any requests by GVTA members for transparent barriers would not be unreasonably denied, and that these costs would be charged to the district rather than school budgets. This position changed without notice, and now GVTA members are being forced to decide between putting their own health at risk and have available funds to purchase needed educational supplies.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Winona Waldron', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Winona Waldron

President
Greater Victoria Teachers' Association

cc: GVSD Trustees
GVTA Members
CUPE 382
CUPE 947