

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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News release

Masks4Canada has created a map to track cases/outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools across Canada, to provide transparency and improve safety in schools

Masks4Canada, an alliance of Canadian physicians, professionals, and citizens, has created this tracker to increase transparency in the risk posed by COVID-19 to Canadian schools. The website includes a live map of cases in schools (short link: <https://tinyurl.com/covidschoolsCA-map>) and a form for Canadians to submit confirmed reports of COVID-19 in schools. (short link: <https://tinyurl.com/covidschoolsCA-submit>). Case reports are collected from individual submissions and where available, websites from the Province, school boards, public health units, grassroots trackers and media. All submissions are voluntary. All reports are verified by supporting documents such as a news article, or letter from the school or public health agency; no personal information is ever included. By providing these data to families, educators and policymakers, this project aims to improve decision-making and change policy to improve safety in Canadian schools. Masks4Canada is available for media questions regarding this map tracker.

The team's immediate goal is to increase awareness of the tracker for Canadians in all Provinces and Territories. As of this writing, the tracker shows 439 Canadian schools have confirmed at least one case of COVID-19, with 9 declared outbreaks. The map has been mentioned in the [Toronto Star](#) and [CTV](#), and has been featured in [Maclean's magazine's list](#) of Canadian COVID-19 school trackers. The public's need for transparency is evidenced by the map, which has 47,500 views since it went live last week, and by its Twitter account (@covidschoolsCA), which is approaching 3,000 followers in under three days.

As cases in the community continue to rise, these numbers will be reflected in schools. Masks4Canada is demanding the following measures in order for all students across Canada to learn safely in schools:

1. Smaller classrooms for 2m physical distancing: The Provincial cutoff of 1m is not adequate. We ask for a maximum of 15 students per classroom and reduced capacity in school buses.
2. Mandatory masks: Schools violate the 3C's of social distancing: they are crowded, closed spaces with prolonged close contact. Mandate masks for students in K-Grade 12 on school buses, in classrooms, and in hallways, with the exception of those with medical contraindications. Mandate masks for educators, bus drivers, and staff as well, as these individuals are part of the school community.
3. Ventilation: Assess ventilation requirements for each classroom and school. Where required, upgrade HVAC systems and purchase air purification units for classrooms and schools. Open windows in classrooms and school buses. Provide outdoor learning as much as possible.
4. Rapid tests: Rapid testing will catch asymptomatic cases, reduce the chance of outbreaks and reduce absenteeism.

5. Outbreak management plan: The government needs to provide a plan for what happens when a student or class or staff member tests positive and maintain transparency. All governments should report cases and outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools.

6. Reduce cases of COVID-19 in the community: Reduce cases in the community by limiting social gatherings and moving indoor businesses outside. Closing high-risk non-essential businesses such as indoor bars, clubs, and karaoke bars can help reduce cases in schools.

The school system underpins our community and economy. We need to provide students and teachers with the safest learning environment possible in hopes of saving lives, limiting long-term disability from COVID-19, and helping the economy recover.

About Masks4Canada: *Masks4Canada is a grassroots group of healthcare workers, professionals, and concerned citizens across Canada who have formed to advocate for mandatory masking in Canada.*
www.masks4canada.org