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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Release: CUPE Education Workers concerned about latest update from the provincial Response Planning Team

SASKATOON: CUPE Education Workers are concerned about the government's latest Response Planning Team (RPT) update, and the continued risk of exposure for staff and students.

"As positive COVID-19 student numbers exceeded 900 in the week of December 7-13, it is troubling that the Saskatchewan government has not taken a more proactive role in delivering education to our province's children," said Rob Westfield, an education support worker and chair of CUPE Saskatchewan's Education Workers' Steering Committee. "With an expectant surge approaching, why has our provincial leadership not stepped in to protect our children and staff working in schools?"

It is concerning that the most recent RPT update states that "guidelines from the Saskatchewan Health Authority indicate that the proper use of a medical grade mask along with a face shield can result in a staff member not being considered a close contact of an individual, who has tested positive for COVID-19, with whom they had been in contact."

"I am concerned that staff and students are not being notified of potential exposure to COVID-19. Why would the government and the RPT not want to err on the side of caution regarding the health and safety of our children and staff?" added Westfield. "We all deserve notice about potential exposure, and everyone in our schools should have access to proper personal protective equipment."

Westfield urges the government to rethink their approach to COVID-19 in our education system.

"I suggest Members of the Legislative Assembly spend some time in one of the many 30 plus student capacity classrooms across the province and then decide how they feel about the health and safety of everyone in our schools," said Westfield.

CUPE represents over 7,000 education support workers across the province in a range of classifications. Education support workers are often in close contact with students – help with schoolwork provide medical care and help with accessibility needs.

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