

September 1, 2022

Dear Principal Patrick Deane, Provost Teri Shearer, and Director of Environmental Health and Safety Dan Langham,

After reviewing the Fall-term COVID-19 guidelines released by Queen's on August 23, 2022, PSAC 901 is writing to express concerns about the lack of care that the university is showing for employees, students, and the wider Kingston community in the face of an on-going pandemic.

As a member of the Kingston community Queen's has a responsibility not only to prioritize the health and safety of its students and workers, but also to the wider population. Our relationship with the Kingston community is precarious at the best of times. **Due to its late reactive approach in the past, Queen's has been responsible for [community spread in Kingston](#) and [beyond](#).** We implore the administration to learn from this experience!

To ensure that minimal masking and vaccination requirements can support the health and safety of our members, infrastructural changes must be in place that enable those supports. However, **Queen's has not been maintaining minimal ventilation standards, a primary concern for COVID's spread in closed spaces. In some cases, it was discovered that systems were using filters still in their plastic packaging!** This is an unacceptable betrayal of trust that endangers the health of those on-campus and beyond.

While the current plan allows for individuals to ask others to mask, there is no guidance on what to do if such a request is not honoured. This lack of support is often met with a heightening of security measures, which may lead to potential workplace distress for our membership, especially equity-seeking groups. For these reasons, we ask that Queen's not place the burden of masking decisions on individual students and workers – a decision we know does little to protect the wearer. ***Instead, we call on Queen's to make masking mandatory in classrooms, workspaces, and all indoor public spaces on campus.***

PSAC 901 has also heard directly from our membership, in the form of an anonymized survey, about concerns around Queen's COVID-19 strategies for this upcoming year — only 29% feel that the guidelines are suitable to tackle the current state of COVID-19 cases. ***Most importantly, only 33.6% of those surveyed felt that Queen's plan does***

enough to protect the health and safety of those on campus and in the wider community, and less than half of our members indicated that they are comfortable returning to campus in September.

Once again, Queen's is not faring well when compared to the examples set by other universities across the province. Universities such as Western, Laurier, and Ontario Tech University have already reinstated masking on campus as in-person classes resume. These universities understand that universal masking remains one of the most important ways to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This awareness is also reflected in the responses of more than 60% of our surveyed membership, who say they would prefer that Queen's reinstate its masking mandate.

Queen's is failing with the current COVID-19 strategy. We insist Queen's do better. Beyond mandatory masking measures, we demand that Queen's take these steps to address membership concerns and enable a safe workplace:

- 1) Maintain promised standards of ventilation, as described in the [Queen's Ventilation Management Plan](#).**
- 2) Ensure that there are regular and well-advertised vaccine clinics throughout the semester to facilitate ease of access to necessary boosters for our community.**
- 3) Distribute adequate PPE to each department and provide ample rapid testing on campus for students and employees to allow anyone needing to test to do so.**
- 4) Commit to providing flexibility and ease of accommodations for our members who cannot carry out their duties on campus due to the on-going pandemic and for those who are now dealing with the effects of Long COVID.**

901 is encouraging our members to review their entitlement to sick leave and accommodations, as detailed in the Collective Agreements ([Unit 1](#) and [Unit 2](#)). We remain committed to helping our members and the larger community navigate these stressful times.

Signed,
The PSAC 901 Executive