

CAMPBELL RIVER MIRROR

Campbell River school district opts not to mandate COVID-19 vaccination for staff

SD72 board chair says public health assures it does not need 100 percent vaccination to be safe

CAMPBELL RIVER STAFF / Nov. 9, 2021 10:10 a.m. / LOCAL NEWS / NEWS

The choice was made at an in-camera meeting on Monday, Nov. 8.

Last month, school boards across the province were told to determine their own vaccine policy for staff by the Education Ministry.

“Throughout the pandemic, our board has been committed to following the guidance and expertise of our health professionals and our decision today is based on the most current information provided by these experts,” said John Kerr, Campbell River School District board chair.

Information provided by the North Island Medical Health Officer played a role in the decision.

It showed that communities served by the school district have high vaccination rates that continue to rise daily, with over 88 percent of those eligible already having received one dose, and 83% percent being fully vaccinated.

The board noted while a vaccine mandate for K-12 staff is one of many interventions available, health officials advised it would have a limited impact on transmission rates because of the already high community vaccination rate, adherence to public health measures, and the fact that schools are not a primary source of COVID-19 cases within the community.

The board also considered how a vaccine mandate could impact the delivery of education and education programs and reviewed the K-12 Sector Guidelines for Vaccination Policies developed by the Ministry of Education, BC Public School Employers’ Association and the provincial advisory group.

“We have a responsibility to keep schools open while providing a safe learning environment. Public health has assured us that our schools continue to be low-risk settings and we do not need 100 percent vaccination rates for safe operation; as evidenced by the fact that since March 2020, the district has had COVID exposure notices but no known cases of in-school transmission,” Kerr said.

“While we are not mandating staff vaccination at this time, our board continues to encourage all who are eligible to get vaccinated and supports Island Health’s vaccination efforts.”