

To: Families and Staff of Frank Roberts Junior High School

FROM: Michael Tobin, Senior Management Official (School Systems)

RE: Building Concerns

DATE: May 14, 2023

Good Day Frank Roberts families,

We understand some staff, students, and families have raised concerns regarding Frank Roberts Junior High. Two senior facilities managers from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District were on site Thursday, May 11, to review the building and discuss the concerns. In addition, On Wednesday, May 10 and Friday, May 12, Environmental Health and Occupational Health and Safety Officers from Service-NL respectively inspected the school. Preliminary reports advise that Frank Roberts passed both inspections, and they commended the level of maintenance and upkeep of the facility. As a result, we wanted to take an opportunity to provide factual accounts of the work undertaken so you can be confident your child is in a safe learning environment.

During the recent weeks, District staff and our pest control contractor have been addressing any issues. Mice have been located and removed, but no evidence of rats have been found in the school. A plan to continue to address mice activity is in place, with regular staff and contractor inspections of the premises. The contractor, the expert in pest control, advises this is not an 'infestation', and assures us the current management plan is appropriate.

We recognize the presence of any mice is disconcerting; mice are an issue many homes, businesses, and facilities deal with. However, once the District identifies mice we act immediately. This matter is given a high priority and we work with both our own staff and contractor until it is resolved. Advice we typically share with building occupants includes:

- All food should be sealed in containers and removed wherever possible;
- No doors should be barred open with items such as rocks, chairs, etc.; and

- In-house maintenance staff are to look for signs of mice activity daily, review the mitigation measures put in place, and disinfect when necessary.

There have been some comments regarding “buckets throughout the hallways to catch water from leaks.” A few months ago, an issue with a roof drain caused some water infiltration. Once detected, action was immediate and there was no damage to the school. It was an isolated but stubborn issue that took multiple visits to fix. There was also a leak some time ago related to an air handling unit, which was resolved. The hoses and buckets are aesthetically unappealing, but necessary to ensure the leaks do not lead to wet building materials, which can lead to other issues. Bins used to catch water have, on occasion, been left in place well after the leak was resolved as an extra assurance. The District will commit to more timely removal when possible in the future. On May 11, a single blue bin left in FRJH was inspected, found to be completely dry, and removed.

Concerns have been raised regarding possible increased sickness and respiratory issues among students and staff as a result of the building. We do know there are a number of germs and viruses making the rounds and causing extended absences throughout the region. We have reviewed Frank Roberts attendance data for any concerning trends and can advise that it is comparable to other junior highs, and there is no increased level of absenteeism. In addition, regular Occupational Health and Safety Committee reports from FRJH have been reviewed by District staff, and up to April, 2023 no concerns of mold, exhaust fumes, or other air quality concerns have been highlighted or flagged for followup. Qualified tradespersons also recently conducted a comprehensive building inspection and found no evidence of mold or similar concerns. Rest assured if mold is visible or suspected, facilities staff investigate immediately and address as required, as per long-standing District policy.

We trust that for many of you, the information shared and results of recent inspections is welcome and reassuring.

If you have further questions, we encourage you to contact the school administration directly to discuss further. Additionally, you can also connect with Director of Schools, Susan Perry. (susanperry@nlesd.ca).

Michael Tobin
Senior Management Official (School Systems)

