



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

Dear Colleagues,

As of this morning, Nova Scotia remains in Phase 4 of its reopening plan, and we continue to approach the upcoming academic year with both optimism and caution. The university community has every reason to believe that we will build off the success of 2020-21 and offer our students another exceptional year of teaching, learning, and research excellence. Still, we recognize the ever-present challenge posed by COVID-19 and its variant strains and therefore continue to proceed under the guidance of Nova Scotia Public Health officials. With this in mind, I wish to provide an update regarding some of StFX's COVID-19 protocols for the upcoming academic year.

NON-MEDICAL MASKS

Non-medical masks will be **mandatory at all times in campus buildings, including in classrooms and labs, until at least September 30 regardless of if the province moves into Phase 5 of its reopening plan**. The only exceptions to this rule are when students are in their own residence buildings, and staff and faculty are within their personal office spaces. For those employees that share office space, masks may be removed when employees are at their desks, appropriately socially distanced.

In alignment with current Public Health directives, masks will not be required while outdoors.

ASYMPTOMATIC TESTING

Public Health officials continue to recommend regular asymptomatic testing for individuals with high numbers of social contacts and have agreed to make asymptomatic rapid point of care tests available on our campus for all staff, faculty, and students. Beginning on Welcome Days, these easy-to-use tests will be handed out to all incoming students, and we will have plenty on-hand for all returning students, staff, and faculty. Regular use of these tests will be an important part of our COVID-19 response for the upcoming academic year. Please watch for more information on how, when, and where these tests can be accessed.

TRAVEL POLICY

The university encourages faculty and staff to minimize all university-related travel within and beyond the Atlantic Region in the fall of 2021. Where virtual options exist for attendance at meetings or conferences, these options are encouraged.

The university will approve travel costs normally covered under various agreements, provided such travel is permitted by Nova Scotia COVID-19 health protocols and that isolation requirements for such travel (as defined at the time of application) will not negatively impact the employee's ability to perform their job responsibilities. Employees must comply with all governmental travel rules and related restrictions on size of gatherings, etc.

With respect to **international travel**, Global Affairs Canada maintains a set of advisories regarding non-essential international travel. As of August 20, 2021, their advice remains "[Avoid non-essential travel outside Canada until further notice.](#)"

VACCINES

Recent decisions from a number of Canadian universities requiring vaccinations for students, staff and faculty have generated much discussion, including here at StFX. To remind the campus community, Public Health has mandated isolation requirements for those partially or unvaccinated individuals who enter our province from outside of the Atlantic Canada region. This constitutes a major difference and an added layer of public health in comparison to the situations in other provinces.

Having said that, today, members of the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) will meet with Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Robert Strang, to discuss considerations relating to vaccination status on campuses across the province. I commit to keeping the campus community informed of our path forward following this meeting.

In the meantime, we continue to work with Public Health regarding the availability of vaccines on campus for any student or employee who needs them. Vaccination appointments can also be made for any number of local pharmacies by visiting www.novascotia.ca/vaccination. Persons who want to make an appointment but do not have a Nova Scotia health card can do so by calling 1-833-797-7772.

The university continues to strongly encourage all students and employees to receive two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine at first opportunity if they have not already done so.

REMAINING DILIGENT – REMEMBER THE BASICS

In closing, I would like to remind everyone about the importance of following public health measures such as physical distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, completing a daily self-assessment for COVID-19 symptoms, participating in periodic asymptomatic testing, and – when necessary – getting a COVID-19 test at the local assessment centre. For more information on StFX's COVID-19 protocols, visit www.stfx.ca/coronavirus.

Sincerely,

Andy W. Hakin
President and Vice-Chancellor
St. Francis Xavier University

