



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

To members of our campus community,

Over the last number of weeks much attention has been paid across Canada to health and safety measures for this fall, including ongoing public health campaigns that encourage all eligible persons to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Recently, a small number of Canadian universities, mostly in Ontario, have announced plans to introduce mandatory vaccine requirements for all students and employees. This has raised questions as to whether StFX plans to follow suit.

The safety and wellbeing of the campus community remains our top priority. As we did last year, we continue to work closely with Nova Scotia's Public Health Officials and rely on their expert advice and guidance to keep our community safe. As of today, Public Health has deemed mandatory vaccinations not necessary for our students, staff and faculty to safely return to the campus given the current epidemiology status and trajectory of COVID-19 within the province. Again, we will continue to follow their advice – the same advice that led us to a tremendously successful last year. In addition, we have obtained advice from legal counsel on the position of making vaccinations mandatory and their advice aligns with the path proposed by Public Health.

Over the summer months, along with many national vaccination campaigns, we have been strongly encouraging all eligible persons to receive two doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine at first opportunity. We introduced the More2gether campaign, reminding all incoming and returning students, staff and faculty about the benefits of being fully vaccinated (e.g. no quarantine requirement when fully vaccinated and entering the province from outside of Atlantic Canada). We employed tactics such as sending reminders via email, incorporating the message into our weekly webinars, and, most recently, held four interactive information sessions for students, hosting over 550 participants. Additionally, we have worked with the province to ensure that asymptomatic testing will be readily available to all on campus.

There is reason to believe these messages are resonating within the StFX community. Unlike other provinces, Nova Scotia is maintaining a self-isolation requirement for partially or non-vaccinated persons arriving from outside of Atlantic Canada. When the provincial government announced these requirements, StFX extended the opportunity for students who live in residence to complete their self-isolation on campus. As of today, only seventeen students have indicated they will need to self-isolate in residence – this is in stark contrast to the approximately 500 students who self-isolated on campus last year. Also, registration for our Neighbours Helping Neighbours program that supports our off-campus students, sits at one this

year -- a far cry from the nearly 650 who required support last September. While it is recognized that these numbers do not paint a full picture, they do suggest, anecdotally, that the vast majority of our students will be fully vaccinated by the time they return to campus.

Our plans are ready; we are ready, and Nova Scotia is continuing on a path towards Phase 5 reopening. This said, our plans include being ready to adapt and respond to maintain the safety of our communities in the event of changing Public Health mandates. As we did last year, we will continue to proceed cautiously, and we have every reason to believe that the upcoming academic year will be a success, with our students enjoying the outstanding teaching, learning, research, and community opportunities for which StFX is known.

Sincerely,

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

