



September 18, 2020

To the campus community,

What a week.

After months of planning for the arrival of our students and the start of the academic fall term at StFX, it was great to see the university move into operational mode this past week. The optimism, expectation, and excitement of students returning to campus injected much positive energy into the institution. It has only been one week, but I am very pleased to report that, by all accounts, we are off to a tremendous start as we near the end of the first full week of classes.

On a personal note, one of the best moments of the last few weeks for Linda and I was welcoming our students to campus during Welcome Days. We've truly never experienced a welcome like that and we feel grateful for the opportunity. I find I am making this observation more and more often: StFX does things differently—and that is a great thing. The enthusiasm expressed by our staff and faculty toward our students, the degree of care and personalization is remarkable. So many people are responsible for this success to date. It is appropriate to say every department has been involved in one way or another. I thank everyone involved. I am extremely proud to be part of such a wonderful community.

Our continued success places responsibilities on each of us. While we have started strong, it is important to remember that we cannot become complacent. With the self-isolation period largely behind us, we must now turn our attention to protecting the 'Antigonish Bubble' we have worked so hard to create.

I am asking our students to do the right thing by first managing themselves. Mask wearing, daily self-checks on health, hand washing, physical distancing are all ways for students to take control at a personal level and in so doing their actions are amplified to support the overall health of the community. If we continue to get the basics consistently right, our success rate will rise exponentially.

I'd like to stress three points that will help us all stay healthy:

- **Stay here.** The arrival of our students in Antigonish has brought zero reported cases of COVID within our community to date. We've successfully created a safe zone within Antigonish. We need to protect this safe zone and so I encourage you to limit your travel outside of Antigonish as much as possible. I appreciate the excitement of larger, urban centres on weekends, however, please consider delaying those trips for the time being. By venturing to larger, urban areas, the number of contacts you make will increase and as a result there is likely a higher risk of becoming infected. If you must travel, ensure that you employ low-risk behaviours.
- **Limit your gatherings to 10 or less** (and make them the same 10). Public Health mandates that we limit our socialization numbers to 10 without the requirement of social distancing. I'm telling people to think of the letter 'X'—the roman numeral for 10. If you get together on the weekend, do it safely. Find your 10. Keep your 10. I know this can be difficult, but with a little thoughtful planning, I'm confident that we can do this. If you can't keep to a gathering of 10 then you must ensure you maintain social distancing – this is the provincial requirement.
- **Don't forget the basics.** As mentioned above, if you continue to wash your hands frequently, wear a mask, and maintain physical distance from others, your ability to keep COVID away from our community is significantly better.

Finally, one more reminder to do your daily health check for symptoms and use 811 if you are feeling ill. By looking after yourself, you are looking after this community and being a good neighbour. As that happens, we will all benefit from the thing we love most – being here in Antigonish, safely together.

I am mindful that this semester is like no other that our students and community have experienced. But different does not mean worse. Faculty and staff have worked incredibly hard to build a framework of academic and social experiences that will continue to distinguish the StFX experience from others.

The successful return of our students and faculty to the classroom and to the campus is a strong sign that our institution is moving forward in what has been, and continues to be, quite a remarkable time.

Your continued efforts will ensure that our forward momentum is maintained. My thanks to you all.

Sincerely,

Andy

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