Families,

This afternoon, Health and Wellness Minister Michelle Thompson and Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia’s chief medical officer of health, announced that Nova Scotia will not be moving to Phase 5 of its reopening plan **until October 4**. [Click here](https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20210914004) to read the news release.

***What does this mean for schools?***

As part of today’s announcement, **masks will continue to be required for anyone in a school building or on a school bus until October 12**. As we currently do, masks may be removed when eating and drinking, participating in physical activity, playing an instrument, and during mask breaks when appropriately distanced from others.

Schools will spend time the week prior to October 12 helping children, students and families plan to successfully transition to masking being optional.

This decision is based on current epidemiology around the fourth wave of COVID-19 and advice from Public Health and pediatricians at the IWK Health Centre. Dr. Strang has stated that schools remain safe places for students and staff. The HRCE continues to follow Public Health direction as outlined in Nova Scotia’s [Back to School Plan](https://backtoschool.ednet.ns.ca/) .

In addition, it was also announced that **starting on October 4**, people who are 12 and older will need to provide proof of full vaccination to participate in most events and activities that bring groups of people together. While the policy is not yet final, it is expected this policy will apply to indoor and outdoor **extra-curricular** school-based activities including sports.

Families can expect to receive more information in the coming weeks as the policy is finalized.

I offer my sincere thanks to all of you for your cooperation in following the core public health measures in place for schools. As a reminder, these are:

* get vaccinated if eligible;
* stay home if feeling sick;
* frequent hand hygiene; and
* sanitizing of high-touch surfaces.

***Our shared health is our shared responsibility!***

Stay well and stay safe,

Elwin LeRoux
Regional Executive Director
Halifax Regional Centre for Education