



September 29, 2021

Dear Residents of Wolfville,

As we approach the end of September, I want to take this opportunity to provide you with a short update on Acadia's return to full on-campus learning. Having successfully managed the arrival of students before and over the Labour Day weekend, we have completed the first three weeks of the fall term without any positive COVID cases in our campus community. As with last year, our pandemic protocols on campus have kept the Acadia and Wolfville community safe from the virus.

Coronavirus aside, like many of you, I am very concerned with the unacceptable behaviour that has occurred both on and off campus over the first few weekends of the term. I sent a direct message to students last week to reinforce that we will not tolerate violent behaviour, and that anyone who is caught conducting themselves inappropriately will be disciplined, and that this can include suspension or expulsion from the university.

Our staff have been working with those identified to ensure they understand the consequences of their actions, and to put them on a path to improving and managing their behaviour. While the more egregious behaviours are carried out by a very small number of students, we take them very seriously. Where we have evidence of an individual's actions, either directly or via our unique partnership with the Town of Wolfville, we have followed up with students to put them through Acadia's non-academic judicial policy.

As we have seen in university towns across the country, including Halifax, there has been a significant increase in such behaviour, and some of this is undoubtedly due to the experience these young people have had during their last 18 months of high school, their lack of the typical social experience that the final years of high school provides, and some degree of letting loose after the restrictions of the pandemic. None of these considerations are an excuse for poor behaviour, but it does make us hope that those few students who are the cause of most of the serious trouble will learn from their experiences and understand the significant consequences that could result. For some their actions may have already determined that the most severe form of discipline is required, and for others they will need to demonstrate a real change in attitude to ensure that they do not suffer the same fate.

I know that many of you are concerned about the potential for excessive behaviours as we approach Thanksgiving and Homecoming weekends in October, and we share that concern. We are exploring a number of initiatives to attempt to keep as many students on campus as possible during these times of increased socialization and partying. While we have to ensure that our on-campus activities do not infringe upon the public health or liquor licensing laws and regulations, we will continue to take actions to try to attract students to stay on campus. Furthermore, we continue to work cooperatively with the Town and the RCMP to try to keep our campus and all surrounding neighbourhoods as safe and healthy as possible.

On the COVID front, I am pleased at how our employees and students have responded to our efforts to reach a very highly vaccinated campus community. I know that some of you are concerned that Acadia chose to set an expectation for all employees and students to get fully vaccinated rather than adopt a mandatory policy. A fundamental principle of public health is to use the least intrusive policy necessary to achieve the desired outcomes. Acadia's approach follows the advice of Dr. Strang and his colleagues in Public Health to take a non-mandatory approach combined with high vaccination expectations, frequent testing, multiple layers of protection, and education and encouragement. Surveys of employees and students, as well as data received from NS Public Health about the vaccination status of our out-of-province students, demonstrated that we would achieve a very high rate of vaccination without imposing additional mandatory requirements.

To enable our campus community to live safely with COVID-19, we are providing on- and off-campus vaccination clinics as well as rapid testing clinics and take-home rapid test kits. We continue to host one of our region's symptomatic PCR testing sites on campus for the benefit of faculty, students, and staff as well as the broader Wolfville and valley community. We require all members of the campus community to wear masks indoors and maintain physical distancing as appropriate and encourage regular hand sanitization. We are maintaining a policy of restricted access to campus for non-essential gatherings and are following all provincial regulations regarding the holding of events.

We continue to monitor the pandemic situation closely and remain ready to impose further restrictions if necessary to protect the safe environment that we have established at Acadia. As we approach the province's move to Phase 5 of their re-opening plan, we have revised our health and safety measures accordingly to ease some restrictions and continue others as appropriate. Per provincial guidance, we will implement proof-of-vaccination requirements for events and activities that involve the public and guests to our campus.

I am pleased to inform you that our enrolments and residence occupancy are very healthy, and that is reflected in how busy and vibrant the town has been over the past few weeks. It is wonderful to see Wolfville businesses back to a level of activity that only happens when Acadia is fully back in operation. We have worked hard to ensure this has occurred in a manner that has kept our community safe, and we will continue to do so as we move into the final re-opening phase and, hopefully, the final stage of the pandemic.

I am very grateful to the Town and residents of Wolfville for the support, co-operation, and constructive criticism over the past 18 months as we have addressed and met the challenges of the pandemic. Our Town and Gown relations remain strong and if anything, have been strengthened by our journey together through this time of crisis. I look forward to new opportunities as we work together to learn to live safely with COVID as a presence in our world.

With best wishes,

