January 13, 2022

Dear Families,

Schools play a critically important role for children, and public health continues to prioritize keeping schools open. I know there will be mixed emotions when students return on Monday. Be assured that schools have enhanced public health measures that offer more layers of protection than most other places your child will be outside of their home. These measures will also help slow the spread of COVID-19 in schools.

We have learned many things during the pandemic but one of the most important lessons is that children need to be in school if possible. The evidence is clear, children do best when they are with their friends and peers. It's how they develop emotionally, physically, and socially. Nova Scotia's Provincial Pediatric Advisory Group also agrees that children need to be in school. With enhanced public health measures in place, the benefits of schools staying open outweigh the risks.

Omicron is all around us and we will continue to work together to solve the problems it will undoubtedly present. The enhanced public health measures in place in schools are built on the following foundation:

- Get vaccinated if you are eligible, including a booster shot
- Stay home if you are feeling unwell and follow guidance for testing and isolation
- Make tests available to students and staff
- Wear your three-ply mask and ensure it is fitted to your face
- Wash or sanitize your hands
- Daily cleaning of high-touch surfaces

We want schools to reduce the mixing of students and the movement of students within their school. Schools are asked to suspend assemblies or large gatherings and non-essential visitors are asked not to enter schools. Your school board or region will share additional information about all of the enhanced public health measures for schools.

I want to thank you and your family for everything you've done since the pandemic began. It hasn't been easy but you've kept your children learning, and you've followed public health advice – steps that have benefitted our children and our communities.

Dr. Robert Strang
Nova Scotia Chief Medical Officer of Health