

COVID-19/HEALTH/WELLNESS--New Restrictions to Reduce Spread of COVID-19

To turn the tide of COVID-19 infections in Nova Scotia, Premier Stephen McNeil and Dr. Robert Strang, chief medical officer of health, announced new restrictions in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and across the province today, Nov. 24.

"We need to flip the switch on COVID-19 right now," said Premier McNeil. "COVID-19 is moving quickly in Halifax, and we need to stop it from spreading further into Nova Scotia. We must bring COVID-19 under control before our health system is overwhelmed and it infects our most vulnerable citizens. Stopping the spread is fully up to us."

New restrictions will come into force at 12:01 a.m. on Thursday, Nov. 26, and continue for two weeks until midnight Dec. 9, with a possibility of extension.

Nova Scotians are being asked to avoid non-essential travel:

-- in and out of western and central HRM (which is defined as HRM from Hubbards to, and including, Porters Lake and the communities up to Elmsdale and Mount Uniacke in Hants County - see <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/> for boundaries).

-- to other Atlantic provinces

The following will apply to the parts of western and central HRM:

-- the gathering limit in public is five (or up to the number of members of an immediate family in a household)

-- mandatory masking now applies to common areas of multi-unit residential buildings, such as apartment buildings and condos

-- restaurants and licenced establishments are closed for in-person dining but may provide take-out or delivery

-- retail stores must restrict shoppers and staff to 25 per cent or less of allowable capacity

-- wineries, distilleries and breweries cannot hold tastings or in-person dining and must follow retail rules in their stores (delivery and curbside pickup allowed)

-- organized sports, recreational, athletic, arts and cultural activities, faith-based activities are paused

-- profit and non-profit fitness and recreational facilities closed

-- libraries and museums are closed, including the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

-- the casino and First Nations gaming establishments are closed

-- stronger enforcement of illegal gatherings, including ticketing of all attendees (total fine of \$1,000)

Schools, after-school programs and childcare will remain open while certain personal services businesses such as hairstylists, estheticians and nail salons in western and central HRM can continue except procedures that cannot be done while a patron is masked.

The following new restrictions apply across the province:

-- to protect our most vulnerable, there will be no visitors except volunteers and designated caregivers to long-term care facilities and Adult Residential Centres and Regional Rehabilitation Centres licensed by the Department of Community Services

-- sports teams are restricted to local or regional play only

-- no extracurricular activities between schools

To further protect our most vulnerable, staff, volunteers and designated caregivers at long-term

facilities in HRM will undergo voluntary, bi-weekly testing. Testing will be phased-in starting Nov. 27.

"COVID-19 loves social and group activities because it can spread quickly and easily," said Dr. Strang. "These measures are targeted to reduce the situations in which COVID-19 thrives. Go to work or go to school, then go home and stay there. One family member can shop for necessities. It will likely get worse before it gets better so don't falter in following public health measures."

Quick Facts:

-- visit <https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/> to do a self-assessment if in the past 48 hours you have had or you are currently experiencing fever or a new cough or you are experiencing two or more of sore throat, runny nose/nasal congestion, headache and shortness of breath

-- testing numbers are updated daily at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus>

-- a state of emergency was declared under the Emergency Management Act on March 22 and extended to Nov. 29

-- online booking for COVID-19 testing appointments is available for Nova Scotians getting a test at all primary assessment centres or at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax

Additional Resources:

Government of Canada: <https://canada.ca/coronavirus>

Government of Canada information line 1-833-784-4397 (toll-free)

The Mental Health Provincial Crisis Line is available 24/7 to anyone experiencing a mental health or addictions crisis, or someone concerned about them, by calling 1-888-429-8167 (toll-free)

Kids Help Phone is available 24/7 by calling 1-800-668-6868 (toll-free)

For help or information about domestic violence 24/7, call 1-855-225-0220 (toll-free)

For more information about COVID-19 testing and online booking, visit <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/symptoms-and-testing/>

The COVID-19 self-assessment is at <https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/>

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