



**Education
Office of the Minister**

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September 1, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians, students and staff:

We know you have heard a lot about the H1N1 virus and may have concerns about how best to keep your family safe, especially as they head back to school.

The H1N1 virus is still a new and evolving strain of influenza, making it difficult to know how it will behave. We expect to see more cases of H1N1 at some point during the coming months, and we are preparing for the possibility that some of these cases will be more severe. We know that the school age children in the 5-19 age group will be most affected by H1N1 and we fully anticipate seeing cases in schools.

The Departments of Education and Health Promotion & Protection, along with school boards and public health agencies across Nova Scotia, have been working closely together to ensure measures are in place to prevent the spread of H1N1 in schools.

If you or your child experience flu-like illness (cough and/or fever, and one or more of sore throat, head/joint/muscle aches, and unusually tiredness), you should stay home and not return to work or school until you are feeling well enough to resume normal activities. This is the most important step to take to prevent spreading H1N1. It may be useful for you to think ahead about how you would handle childcare arrangements in this situation.

Prevention is the best way to protect yourself and your family from becoming infected. That includes:

- washing your hands thoroughly and often (soap and water is preferred but if it's not available, use hand sanitizer),
- coughing or sneezing into your sleeve or arm,
- avoiding touching your eyes, mouth and nose with your hands,
- thoroughly cleaning common surfaces (counters, door knobs, light switches, etc)
- getting immunized when the H1N1 vaccine becomes available

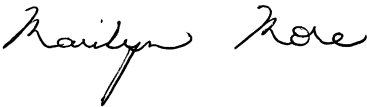
At this time Public Health is developing detailed plans to provide H1N1 vaccine to all Nova Scotians who need and want the vaccine. We anticipate that the H1N1 vaccine will become available in mid-November. Details on the H1N1 immunization program will be communicated as they become available.

We do not anticipate the need to close schools. Nor will we be making public announcements about when and where cases of H1N1 are confirmed. However, please be assured that we will monitor the situation closely, share useful information with you as it becomes available and at all times make decisions that are in the best interests of our children and staff.

You can find the latest information, including the H1N1 toolkit developed for schools, and regular updates on the virus at the Department of Health Promotion and Protection website: www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/cdpc/h1n1-influenza.asp.

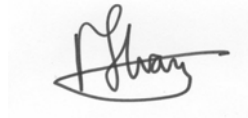
On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, we wish you a safe and productive school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marilyn More".

Marilyn More, Minister of Education

and

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Strang".

Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Public Health Officer