

June 2, 2021

Dear new and returning Trent students:

As Peterborough's Medical Officer of Health, I want to add my words of welcome to you as you begin this next exciting chapter in your academic career, or if you are returning to continue your studies. We look forward to having you as part of our Peterborough community. As you prepare to visit, I want you to take the necessary steps to ensure that you will have the maximum protection against COVID-19 by the time you arrive.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is the single most important intervention in reducing the transmission of COVID-19. Ensuring a high amount of vaccine coverage in Trent students, particularly in those who live in residence, will be critical to ensuring that studies and lives are not disrupted by outbreaks. This will require two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, and at least two weeks since the last dose prior to your arrival in our region in the fall of 2021.

I support Trent University's requirement for immunization of residents of its post-secondary residences as an important measure to protect the health and safety of all prospective occupants. As Medical Officer of Health, I urge you to seek immunization as soon as possible so that you are fully protected by the end of August. Data from the UK, where new Variants of Concern are circulating, demonstrate that two doses of a vaccine are critical in reducing the risk of infection. If you completed your secondary school education in Ontario, you will be familiar with our Immunization of School Pupils Act and its associated regulations as an example of a mandatory vaccine policy, as well an approach to providing rare, reasonable and appropriate exemptions. Check with your primary care provider if you are uncertain whether you can or should be immunized. They can complete any required documentation should you require an exemption.

Immunization is the first and most important step in ensuring you have a COVID-free academic year, but it is not a guarantee. Other public health measures such as self-isolating if you develop any symptoms consistent with COVID-19, getting tested, wearing a face covering when sharing indoor air with others, hand hygiene and physical distancing will all help keep you and your residence community as safe as possible. It is important to remember that the greatest risk of infection with COVID-19 occurs even before you become symptomatic, and in those first couple of days, when symptoms can be very mild.

Peterborough Public Health will be collaborating with our partners at Trent University to provide you with the supports you need while here in our community, to stay safe and stay well, including access to testing and immunization.

If you have questions about COVID-19 please visit our website at www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca or call us at 705-743-1000. Hoping you have a great summer and a safe start to your academic year!

Sincerely,

Rosana Pellizzari Salvaterra, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health