



**MINISTER
OF EDUCATION**

Room 168
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
R3C 0V8

MAR 10 2020

To: Superintendents of School Divisions
Directors of First Nations Education Authorities
Student Services Administrators
Principals of First Nations Schools
Principals of Funded Independent Schools

Dear Colleagues:

As you are aware, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of a novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19) in January 2020. Our top priority is always planning for the safety of all students and staff.

COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to other viruses. As such, I encourage schools to continue to take measures to help prevent the spread of viruses. Best practices for the prevention of viral illness include regular and thorough handwashing with warm water and soap, coughing and sneezing into an arm or tissue, encouraging people to stay home from school or work when they are sick, and ensuring that surfaces and objects are wiped with disinfectant regularly.

For students and staff traveling abroad, the risk associated with COVID-19 will vary depending on the destination. If your schools are planning out-of-country trips, please review the attached insert from Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and ensure that students and parents/guardians are aware of the potential risks. For current travel advice and health notices about COVID-19, please visit the Government of Canada's Travel Advice and Advisories website at: www.travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice.

Manitoba Education will continue to work closely with local health officials, school divisions and other partners to monitor, gather information, assess risk and respond as new information becomes available. For up-to-date information and resources, please visit the following websites:

- www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus
- www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Sincerely,

Kelvin Goertzen

Attachment

c. Chairs of School Boards

Provincial Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information and Resources for Schools and Educators

In December 2019, COVID-19 (previously referred to as 2019-nCoV), was identified in Wuhan, China, caused by a novel (new) coronavirus. The situation continues to evolve rapidly and a growing number of countries are reporting COVID-19 cases. **To date Manitoba has no laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases. Manitoba public health officials continue to prepare for the virus in the province.**

Provincial health officials continue to work with national (the Public Health Agency of Canada) and international (World Health Organization) partners to monitor, gather information, assess risk and respond to the evolving COVID-19 situation.

COVID-19 can spread through close contact with an infected person who is coughing or sneezing as well as by objects contaminated with the virus. Recommended prevention measures for common viruses such as seasonal influenza are also effective for COVID-19.

Prevention measures include:

- Washing your hands regularly with warm water and soap for at least 15 seconds. If soap and water are unavailable, and if your hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol based hand cleanser may be used.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing, or you can cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Avoiding close contact (within two meters/ six feet) with anyone showing symptoms of a respiratory illness such as coughing or sneezing.
- **Staying home when you are sick, regardless of recent travel.**

Please visit the Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL) website (www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html) for updated information including factsheets, commonly asked questions and answers, posters encouraging proper hand hygiene and coughing tips and workplace resources. These materials and resources are updated regularly as new information/ evidence becomes available. **You are encouraged to print, post and share these materials and ensure a process is in place to replace them as information changes.**

Travel

While China remains the epicenter of the outbreak, more and more countries continue to report COVID-19 cases. Evidence of local transmission of COVID-19 cases is being reported in a growing number of countries, many of which are located in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. For a current list of countries with local transmission, go to www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html.

Public health officials strongly recommend reviewing the current Government of Canada travel advisories (www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-

[infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html](https://www.infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html)) before planning any trips outside of the country. While prevention measures can minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19, given the evolving situation, individuals and groups should consider their response to the following:

- Limited healthcare services in some areas, as authorities respond/ prepare to the evolving COVID-19 outbreak.
- What to do if a trip leader/ teacher/ student becomes sick while abroad.
- What to do if a trip leader/ teacher/ student or group is ordered to self-isolate while abroad, either due to illness or close contact with a case of COVID-19.
- What to do if travel restrictions, such as a community level quarantine, are implemented while travelling.
- Ensure everyone is informed of the need to:
 - self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days upon return to Canada.
 - self-isolate for up to 14 days at home upon return, in the event that you develop COVID-19 symptoms, or if Public Health guidance changes.
- Travellers returning from Iran or Hubei province (China) must self-isolate for 14 days upon their return to Canada.
 - Other countries may be added to this category at any time.

To self-monitor symptoms, you should take your temperature twice a day, in the morning and at nighttime, using a digital thermometer by mouth (oral). Do not eat, drink, smoke and/or chew gum 30 minutes before taking your temperature. Do not take acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) during the 14-day self-monitoring period UNLESS your health care provider advises otherwise. A Temperature Self-Monitoring Form is available on the MHSAL coronavirus website (www.manitoba.ca/health/coronavirus/providers.html).

Self-isolation means avoiding situations where you could infect other people. This can help prevent the spread of infections. DO NOT attend activities or gatherings where you may come in close contact with other people. This includes work, school and university, public transport (plane/bus/taxi/carpool), health-care facilities, faith-based facilities (church), grocery stores or restaurants, shopping malls, sporting events, concerts and birthday parties. For more information, visit: https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/factsheets/coronavirus_selfisolation.pdf.

Translation of materials to languages in addition to English and French is underway and will be posted on the MHSAL website as available.

Please direct any questions or concerns to PH-EPR@gov.mb.ca