



March 13, 2020

Via Email:
Attention: LRSD Staff

Re: Upcoming Travel: Following Government Recommendations and Protocol for COVID-19

We are providing this written communication to all staff given the quickly evolving worldwide Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation of which you are all aware, in combination with our upcoming spring break which no doubt involves travel plans for many. First, we should all understand that:

1. We all have a responsibility to protect our health, our family, and others around us including our workplace;
2. We are not doctors or medical experts so we are reviewing and relying on reports from those trusted and authoritative sources just like you are;
3. The situation and the advice and best practices flowing from that situation has changed rapidly over the last 24 to 48 hours and it would be naïve to not concede that those changes and updates could continue and we must be ready to monitor that and adapt accordingly;
4. We have already distributed communication on healthy and preventative workplace practices, preventative measures and other matters; the purpose of this communication is to address specifically the travel issue arising from the Alberta Government Announcement March 12, 2020; and
5. A consistent theme of communication seen arising from proper government and health authorities on this issue is that all of us, individually and as organizations, need to be mindful, prepared and proactive on this worldwide emergency health issue but at the same time it is important that there not be an “overreaction” to what for most generally healthy infected persons will be only minor illness.

On the afternoon of Thursday March 12, 2020 Alberta’s Chief Medical Officer of Health’s announcement included the following quotation:

"In addition to these measures, I am expanding my recommendation from yesterday, and am advising Albertans to not travel outside of the country at this time. Given the rapid global spread of the virus, it is no longer possible to assess health risks for the duration of the trip.

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PO Box 1810, 410 20 Street • Fort Macleod AB T0L 0Z0
Phone: 403-625-3356 • Fax: 403-553-0370 • Toll-Free: 800-310-6579 • www.lrsd.ca

“Also, given the quickly evolving nature of this outbreak, I am recommending that Albertans who are currently outside the country self-isolate on their return for 14 days, independent of the country they were visiting.

“Finally, I am recommending that any Albertan who is ill with influenza-like symptoms such as fever or cough stay at home for 14 days after their illness started.”

We understand and respect that normally your personal vacation time and location is none of our business as your employer. However, flowing from these new government recommendations we ask that you respect and follow these recommendations most importantly for:

1. Your own health;
2. Your family and loved ones health that may include more vulnerable persons;
3. The health of our entire school community including of course our students, coworkers and their families; and
4. To do your part in us all getting through this with minimal severe consequences or disruptions.

If, despite the government warnings, you are still considering travelling outside Canada understand that:

1. Given the new government recommendation on 14 days self-isolation on return from travel outside Canada, even if you have no symptoms whatsoever, we as your employer not only will but must enforce this 14 days of self-isolation;
2. This means that we all know with certainty that if you choose to voluntarily leave Canada, that you will have to be in self-isolation for an additional 14 days upon your return even if you are perfectly healthy;
3. As a result the vacation you plan to take outside Canada now must be planned, booked and approved to account for your time out of Canada and 14 days following your return;
4. If you do not have this extra 14 days’ vacation time available or operations cannot facilitate your absence for that period you will not be permitted to take this vacation given the extended 14 day period that unfortunately is a certainty at this time;

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5. While each case will be reviewed on its facts, if you are trapped or delayed from returning to Canada, and are not sick, your delayed return will not be sick leave and will be unpaid or, if you have any available, use of your accrued vacation bank; and
6. Please consult our benefit provider for the potential lack of benefits or coverage given a voluntary choice to travel outside of Canada contrary to government recommendations.

We recognize that canceling or altering vacation plans is very disappointing to most but we are all “in the same boat here”. The above direction is not intended to be punitive. In fact, quite the opposite, the government and specifically Alberta’s Chief Medical Officer of Health have made this very serious recommendation for the safety of you and your family. We are also hopeful for all of us with booked travel plans that the government recommendation against travel outside Canada will assist those who need to claim under cancellation policies or insurance.

If you have any questions with respect to your planned travel and its potential effect on your workplace, please contact me.

Further communication will follow on other proactive workplace issues and new protocol to report illness and seek self-isolation given the new government recommendations but we wanted to communicate on travel ASAP given many of you have pending travel plans.

Sincerely,

Darryl Seguin
Superintendent