

Memorandum

March 10, 2020

Dear Alberta School Superintendents/Colleagues:

Subject: Spring Travel and COVID-19

This time of year, many families are planning travel during the March break. It is also a popular time for school trips outside of Alberta.

Decisions regarding whether or not to travel remain the responsibility of families and schools. The COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly with increasing global spread, so it is important that people have up-to-date information to inform these decisions. All Albertans are encouraged to visit www.alberta.ca/COVID19 or www.ahs.ca/covid for guidance around prevention, testing and other useful information.

Travel advisories are issued by the federal government and can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>. In addition to travel advisories, this site also offers information on the health risks of travel specific to the evolving COVID-19 situation. Schools and families are encouraged to visit this site to help guide their decision on whether to continue with travel or adjust their travel plans. It is also important to know that decisions made by travel companies, airlines and other countries may affect your travel plans.

While the current risk of catching the virus in Alberta remains low, this may change in the coming weeks. We will continue taking whatever steps are necessary to minimize risk and keep Albertans safe. The following steps are important in preventing the spread of common respiratory illnesses (such as influenza) as well as COVID-19 whether at home or while travelling:

- use good hygiene practices, such as frequent handwashing
- cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Dispose of tissues immediately and wash your hands
- avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill
- don't share items that may have saliva on them such as drinking glasses and water bottles
- clean high touch surfaces such as taps, door knobs and counter tops frequently

- contact your primary health provider or Health Link by calling 811 if you have questions or concerns about your health

You may have questions about what it means when a student or staff member at a school is asked to self-isolate after being in close contact with a case of COVID-19. Self-isolation is a cautious approach and if that person has no symptoms, they are not considered to have exposed others to the virus. Other students do not need to be kept home. Health officials will already be ensuring that all appropriate precautions are being taken.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deena', followed by a stylized flourish.

Deena Hinshaw, BSc, MD, MPH, CCFP, FRCP
Chief Medical Officer of Health

cc: Andre Corbould, Deputy Minister, Alberta Education
Michael Walter, Assistant Deputy Minister, Alberta Education
Paul Lamoureux, Executive Director-Field Services, Alberta Education
Ronald Taylor, Director, FNMI Services, Alberta Education
Clint Vair, Branch Continuity Officer, Alberta Education