

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 8, 2020

TO ADMINISTRATORS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

As part of the Québec government's mobilization efforts regarding coronavirus disease 2019, we would like to assure you that we are monitoring the situation closely, together with the Organisation de la sécurité civile du Québec.

All educational organizations and institutions have an important role to play. Accordingly, we ask that you take note of information released by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and distribute it to your networks.

With March break coming to an end and in view of the spread of COVID-19 on a global scale, Québec's public health authorities would like to remind people of precautions that should be taken when returning from travels outside Canada.

It is important that travellers coming back from a trip abroad pay close attention to their state of health. People in this situation are asked to watch for symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, coughing and difficulty breathing) for a period of 14 days starting from the date of their return to Canada. If they experience these symptoms, the first thing to do is to call Info-Santé 811 so that a nursing staff member can assess the situation, give appropriate instructions and advise on any precautions to be taken if a medical consultation is required.

Keep in mind that measures are being taken by international airports to identify all travellers returning to Canada who may be infected with COVID-19 and to inform them of what to do if they develop symptoms.

At this time, only travellers coming from the Chinese province of Hubei or from Iran are encouraged to go into voluntary isolation upon their return. Travellers coming back from continental China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan or Singapore should check for symptoms for 14 days and avoid places where it is impossible to easily isolate themselves from others if they develop symptoms. In certain cases, regional public health departments could issue a recommendation of voluntary isolation following analysis of accompanying factors that may present a health risk.

The circulation of the virus in numerous countries could eventually make it necessary to issue recommendations regarding other areas.

With respect to future trips, the risk for Canadian travellers abroad varies by destination. The Public Health Agency of Canada identifies four levels of risk for travel abroad. It recommends that citizens avoid non-essential travel to countries or areas considered high risk (level 3) and to avoid all travel to countries that present an extreme risk (level 4).

Note that your regional public health department can help you develop a strategy specific to your needs if an emergency arises in your institutions. We also encourage you to consult the press release dated March 8 from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, at <https://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/ministere/salle-de-presse/communiqu-2057/> (in French only).

The health and safety of the students and staff in your institutions are a priority of the Québec government. We are counting on your collaboration in disseminating this information and ensuring that it is duly considered in your administrative practices over the coming weeks.

Yours truly,

Eric Blackburn
Deputy Minister