

## **COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS)** as of March 16 at 4:00 pm

### **COVID-19 – the disease, symptoms, it's spread, testing and precautions**

#### **What is COVID-19?**

- COVID-19 is the official name for the disease causing the novel coronavirus outbreak, which was first identified in Wuhan China and now has spread around the world. The name stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019.

#### **What is a novel coronavirus?**

- Novel coronaviruses are new strains of the coronavirus that have not been previously identified in humans. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that include common human coronaviruses that cause the common cold and more serious ones that include SARS, MERS, and most recently, COVID-19.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

- Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza and other respiratory illnesses. The most common symptoms are fever, tiredness and a dry cough. Most people (around 80%) recover without needing medical treatment.
- Those who are older, and those with other medical problems are more likely to develop serious symptoms, which can include difficulty breathing and pneumonia. There is a risk of death in severe cases.
- Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19.

#### **How does COVID-19 spread?**

- COVID-19 is spread by others who have the virus. It is transmitted from person to person through droplets from the nose or mouth, which are spread when a person with the virus coughs or exhales. People then catch COVID-19 when they breathe in these droplets.
- These droplets can also contaminate objects or surfaces. People can then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Studies suggest that the virus only lasts a few hours on a surface, though it may be possible for it to last several days under ideal conditions. There is no evidence currently that suggests COVID-19 can be spread through imported goods.

#### **Can COVID-19 be spread through the air?**

- Current evidence indicates COVID-19 is not airborne and only transmitted through respiratory droplets when an individual coughs or exhales (see above).

#### **Can COVID-19 be spread by a person who has no symptoms?**

- Because the disease spreads through respiratory droplets, the risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms is low. However, for many people, symptoms may be very mild. In

these cases, transmission is possible – even if the person is feeling well and only experiencing a mild cough, for example.

### **What precautions should Albertans take to stay healthy?**

- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.
- We have updated our travel advice and are recommending against any travel outside of the country.
- Additionally, we are recommending as of March 12th that any traveller returning from outside of the country should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- If symptoms do emerge, the individual is asked to first use the simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) developed by Alberta Health Services to help you decide whether you need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide you to answer questions about your symptoms and take you through steps to help determine whether you need testing.
- We are making these recommendations based on the ongoing developments outside Alberta, both in the actions being taken by other jurisdictions, as well as the increasing spread of cases around the world.
- Anyone who is feeling ill, even if they have not travelled, should stay home and not visit hospitals, long-term care facilities or supportive living accommodations. Albertans who are not experiencing symptoms can continue to visit loved ones in these facilities.
- Alberta is asking organizers to cancel any events that have more than 250 attendees. This includes large sporting events, conferences and community events. It does not extend to grocery stores, airports, shopping centres and casinos at this time.
- Any event that has more than 50 attendees and expects to have international participants, or involves critical infrastructure staff, seniors, or other high-risk populations should also be cancelled.
- All municipalities, businesses and other organizations should continue business continuity planning to prepare critical operations for any potential interruption.

### **What other precautions can I take?**

For Albertans looking to prepare for COVID-19, Alberta public health officials recommend the following:

- Stay up to date on the situation and get your information from reliable sources, such as this webpage: [www.alberta.ca/COVID19](http://www.alberta.ca/COVID19).
- Have enough essential supplies (food, water and medicine) to last for 72 hours, but avoid panic buying — the unnecessary purchasing of large quantities of items.
  - For more information on how to be prepared for emergencies, go to: <https://www.alberta.ca/build-an-emergency-kit.aspx>
- Create a household plan of action. This can include these elements:
  - Talk with the people who need to be included in your plan.
  - Meet with household members, other relatives, and friends to discuss what to do if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community and what the needs of each person will be.
  - Plan ways to care for those who might be at greater risk for serious complications. This includes practical steps like ensuring you have sufficient medication and determining what supplies are needed, and if they can be delivered.
  - Talk with your neighbours about emergency planning.

- Create a list of local organizations that you and your household can contact in the event you need access to information, health care services, support and resources.
- Create an emergency contact list.
- Practice good personal health habits and plan for home-based actions:
  - Practice everyday preventive actions, like those listed in the prevention section.
  - Choose a room in your home that can be used to separate sick household members from those who are healthy. Identify a separate bathroom for the sick person to use, if possible. Plan to clean these rooms, as needed, when someone is sick.
- Be prepared for temporary closures of your child's school or childcare facility:
  - Effective immediately, students will no longer be attending classes in K-12 schools until further notice.
    - This decision was made after extensive discussion from school boards and based on the current situation.
  - Every K-12 student will receive a final mark and students will progress to their next grade level next year.
  - Provincial assessments, such as provincial achievement tests, will be cancelled.
  - At this time, diploma exams essential for post-secondary acceptance will continue.
    - Every student who is eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this year will graduate. Teachers and other school staff will still be expected to work, either from home or at their workplace, to ensure these expectations are met.
  - Decisions on how to do this are still to be made, and it may vary depending on the school jurisdiction.
- All licensed child care, out-of-school care programs and preschool programs in Alberta are closed at this time, as well.
  - Approved day homes are exempt because they care for fewer than seven children at a time. These programs are encouraged to use enhanced sanitation practices.
- Plan for potential changes at your workplace.
  - Learn about your employer's emergency operations plan.
  - Ask about what sick-leave policies and telework options are available if needed.

### **When someone tests positive, isn't the public at risk?**

- As soon as a case is identified, our public health measures take immediate action to protect Albertans.
- Once a case is confirmed, AHS immediately conducts a risk assessment of anyone who may have come in close contact with them.
- Anyone who may have come in close contact will be asked to self-isolate at home, away from the public, until 14 days have passed since their last contact with the case, and will be closely monitored by public health officials.
- If they do develop symptoms, health officials will coordinate getting them into care immediately while ensuring that the public and health-care workers are not exposed.
- Anyone who is not contacted, is not at risk and does not need to take any additional measures

### **Can you tell us the identity of case #?**

- We cannot comment on any specific individual or case due to patient confidentiality.
- We take patient confidentiality seriously, and so are appropriately balancing it with the public interest.

- We are releasing the sex, approximate age, zone and cumulative travel history to ensure that Albertans are informed while still respecting each person's right to privacy when receiving medical care.
- Generally speaking, anytime someone tests positive for COVID-19, health officials take immediate action to protect the health of everyone involved and prevent the virus from spreading.
- This includes isolating the case, assessing all close contacts and asking anyone at risk of being exposed to self-isolate for 14 days.
- I want to stress that, if you have not been contacted directly by AHS, you are not at risk.

### **Couldn't these individuals have spread it to anyone they met in grocery stores or other public places?**

- We take swift action to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Anyone who tested positive or who was in close contact with someone who did is asked to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- It's important to remember how this virus spreads. Unlike measles, it is not airborne.
- At this time, it appears COVID-19 is transmitted through person-to-person spread by larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze, or touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Individuals who passed a confirmed case on the street are not at risk to have contracted the virus.
- We continue to act on the best possible information and alert Albertans as appropriate, including updating our travel advice and recommending against any travel outside of the country.
- Additionally, we are recommending as of March 12<sup>th</sup> that any traveller returning from outside of the country should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms. If symptoms do emerge, the individual is asked to first use the simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) developed by Alberta Health Services to help you decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide the individual to answer questions about their symptoms & take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.
- Effective immediately, students will no longer be attending classes in K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions until further notice.
- Post-secondary campuses will still remain open, but classes are cancelled.
- All licensed child care, out-of-school care programs and preschool programs in Alberta are closed at this time, as well.
  - Approved day homes are exempt because they care for fewer than seven children at a time. These programs are encouraged to use enhanced sanitation practices.
- We are making these recommendations based on the ongoing developments outside Alberta, both in the actions being taken by other jurisdictions, as well as the increasing spread of cases around the world.

### **Who are you testing?**

- We are currently testing anyone who has symptoms and:
  - travelled from anywhere outside of Canada, or
  - had close contact with a person with symptoms/confirmed COVID-19 who had travelled outside of Canada in the 14 days before their illness.

- Any individual in a community setting who is swabbed for respiratory illness is also being tested for COVID-19.
  - This applies to all hospital, emergency, urgent care and long-term care facilities.
- We are also conducting testing of samples from the existing influenza surveillance network as well as other returning travellers or those in close contact with them.

### **Is Alberta's current testing capacity enough?**

- We have dramatically expanded testing in Alberta and will be increasing capacity further in the coming days.
- This includes opening assessment centres, where needed, increasing the number of nurses at Health Link 811 and procuring additional lab equipment.
- Alberta Health Services has also developed a simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help individuals decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide individuals to answer questions about their symptoms and take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.
- We are confident that we will be able to meet Albertans' testing needs.

### **Where is the testing being done?**

- Testing for the novel coronavirus was originally done both in Alberta and at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.
- We originally announced presumptive cases of COVID-19 and sent samples to the National Microbiology Laboratory to confirm the result. This is best practice for a province's initial confirmations.
- As of March 9, positive samples tested by Alberta laboratories no longer require further confirmation from the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.

### **Where are the assessment centres located?**

- There are currently two assessment centres: 1 in Edmonton and 1 in Calgary.
- Calgary Zone established its first COVID-19 fast-track drive-up assessment service on March 10. It operates 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.
  - There are staff in the parking lot directing patients who have been referred to the fast-track service area. Staff who are administering the swab to patients in the drive-up area follow the same PPE protocols as Assessment Centre staff.
- Plans are also in place to add a second fast-track site in Calgary. It is expected to open Tuesday, March 17. Its hours of operation will be 7 days a week, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- This fast-track drive-thru service is in addition to the existing Assessment Clinic that opened March 8 in Calgary.
- We are not facilitating media or general public access to our Assessment Centres at this time.
- These are clinical facilities, and available on a referral basis only.
- We do not share these locations as we do not want to confuse public who may believe that they can walk-in.
- Again, these are not walk-in clinics. Those individuals who are referred to these clinics are provided with location specifics.

### **Can we (MEDIA) go visit one?**

- We won't be providing media access to the assessment centres, for a number of reasons.

- It would not be prudent or safe to let media into areas where people who may have COVID-19 are being assessed.
- In addition, we have to ensure that we protect patient privacy.
- And, we have to prevent any disruption to our healthcare teams during this time.
- We have developed b-roll footage, which can be provided at anytime.

### **Are assessment centres safe?**

- We have taken every precaution to ensure that assessment centres are safe for patients being tested, staff and the public.
- Infection prevention control and personal protective equipment measures are in place at all assessment centres. These ensure that COVID-19 is not transmitted to staff or other patients
- Individuals who visit the centres for their referred testing are required to wear masks, and all staff working at the site are also wearing masks, gowns and all other necessary personal protective equipment.
- Additionally, enhanced cleaning is in place, to address the risk of droplet contact transmission on surfaces.

### **How are we coping with current volumes?**

- We have significantly extended our lab testing hours for COVID-19 testing, starting early in the morning and typically ending after midnight.
- We are in the process of bringing in more well-trained staff from other areas of the lab network, as well as areas such as molecular pathology and genetics.
- We are bringing in additional laboratory instruments to help increase capacity.
- Fast-track drive-up assessment services have been established in Calgary Zone to increase capacity and speed of service for COVID-19 testing.
  - The first drive-up service was established on March 10, and the second is planned to open on March 17.
- Alberta Health Services has also developed a simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help individuals decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide individuals to answer questions about their symptoms and take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.

### **How can I follow along and stay-up-to-date with new developments?**

- Visit [alberta.ca/COVID19](http://alberta.ca/COVID19) for the latest information.

## **Self-isolation**

### **I was requested to self-isolate. What does that mean?**

- Public health officials recommend the following self-isolation guidelines:
  - Avoid close contact with other people, especially those with chronic conditions, a compromised immune system, or seniors.
  - Do not attend work, social events or any other public gatherings.
  - Watch for symptoms like fever, cough or difficulty breathing in yourself or a family member.
  - Should any symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

- [For more information, consult the self-isolation guidelines.](#)

### **Is their employer closed? Should co-workers be self-isolated?**

- AHS works closely with an employer and any co-workers who are in close contact and at risk of exposure will be self-isolated.
- Alberta Health has not recommended that any businesses close to protect the public health from COVID-19.
- Some employers have made their own operational decision to temporarily close. That is the decision of the employer, not Alberta Health.

### **How will you know if someone in self-isolation is safe?**

- If 14 days pass without symptoms, anyone in isolation will be clinically assessed as not having COVID-19.
- Any cases of the virus will need to have their symptoms end, followed by two successive negative test results 24 hours apart.

### **If family members or travellers are self-isolating in a household, do other members of the same household also need to self-isolate? Specifically, if no one is showing symptoms?**

- At this time, no, other household members are not required to self-isolate, but they should monitor for symptoms (and self-isolate if symptoms occur).
- Should any symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

## **Employment supports and Financial Assistance**

### **Do employers have to allow someone to work from home when they self-isolate?**

- The Government of Alberta is recommending that employers work with their employees to explore alternate working arrangements, when possible. For example:
  - Allow employees to work from home or remotely.
  - Allow employees to do alternate work that does not require them to contact other individuals in the community or at the workplace.
- However, employers have no obligation to schedule employees.

### **Does government provide financial or other assistance to people who self-isolate?**

- On March 13, the Government of Alberta announced changes to the Employment Standards Code that will allow employees who are required to self-isolate or are caring for a loved one with COVID-19 to take 14 days of paid job-protected leave to cover the self-isolation period being recommended by Alberta's chief medical officer of health.
- There will be no requirement to have a medical note for such leave or to have worked for an employer for 90 days to qualify for such leave.
- The details of how these changes will be administered will be provided in the coming days.
- The Government of Alberta is recommending that employees and employers work together to explore alternate working arrangements for individuals who need to self-isolate.
  - This could include working from home or remotely, doing work that does not require the employee to contact other people in the community or at work.
  - If an alternate working arrangement is not possible, employees can use paid sick time if their employer offers this. Employees may also be able to use five days of sick time

without risk of losing their job with the personal and family responsibility leave, but this time is unpaid.

- If employees need to take time off work to care for a sick family member, they can take an unpaid critical illness leave if they can provide a medical certificate saying that the family member needs care.
- The federal government is putting financial supports in place to assist workers and businesses impacted by COVID-19: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/canadas-reponse/government-canada-takes-action-covid-19.html>

### **What is being done to address income supports for casual employees that may have to be off work?**

- On March 13, the Government of Alberta announced changes to the Employment Standards Code that will allow employees who are required to self-isolate or are caring for a loved one with COVID-19 to take 14 days of paid job-protected leave to cover the self-isolation period being recommended by Alberta's chief medical officer of health.
- There will be no requirement to have a medical note for such leave or to have worked for an employer for 90 days to qualify for such leave.
- The details of how these changes will be administered will be provided in the coming days.

### **Is a doctor's note required? Will I lose my income? Will I lose my job?**

- We do not want Albertans going to medical facilities to obtain doctors notes.
- We're acting quickly to protect Albertans by implementing paid, job-protected leave. Details of how these changes will take effect will be provided in the coming days.
- Changes to the Employment Standards Code will allow employees to take 14 days of paid, job-protected leave if they are:
  - required to self-isolate
  - sick or caring for a loved one with COVID-19
- To be eligible, employees:
  - will not be required to have a medical note
  - do not need to have worked for an employer for 90 days
- This leave covers the self-isolation period recommended by Alberta's chief medical officer. We recognize this could put pressure on employers, and are working towards a solution to address these challenges.
- Alberta is currently working with the federal government to explore further paid benefits options through the Employment Insurance program.

### **Someone I know is self-isolating, what should I do?**

- Self-isolation is a precautionary measure and does not mean that the individual is infected with COVID-19.
- Individuals are asked to self-isolate while awaiting testing. Those around them do not need to take any additional steps to protect their health.
- Alberta Health has not recommended that any businesses or buildings be closed at this time.
- In the event that testing determines an individual is a confirmed case, public health officials will immediately connect with any close contacts believed to be at risk.
- Anyone at risk will be contacted directly by AHS. If you have not been contacted, you are not at risk.



## **Schools, Out-of-School Care, Child Care, and Post-Secondary**

### **Have you made the decision to close schools and child care facilities?**

- Effective immediately, students will no longer be attending classes in K-12 schools for the remainder of the school year.
- Teachers and other school staff need to continue working either in school or from home to ensure content is delivered to students.
- Decisions on how exactly to do this are still to come and may vary depending on the school jurisdiction.
- All licensed childcare and out-of-school care programs in Alberta are closed at this time as well.
  - Approved day homes are exempt due to the number of children they care for, but are encouraged to use enhanced sanitation practices.

### **What has changed in the last 24-hours that has made you change your mind?**

- Yesterday, we saw 17 new cases confirmed in Alberta. More concerning, two of the cases identified in the last two days seem to have been acquired through community spread from an unknown source, and seven cases occurred as a result of a single gathering in the Calgary area.
- The health of Albertans is, and always will be, our top priority.
- It is now time to move forward with more aggressive measures to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Alberta.
- We will get through this together, but we need your support.
- All Albertans are strongly encouraged to follow public health guidance and do their part to keep themselves and their communities safe through good hygiene practices, social distancing and other protective measures.

### **How long will schools, post-secondary institutions and child care centres be closed?**

- Effective immediately, students will no longer be attending classes in K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions until further notice.
  - Every K-12 student will receive a final mark and students will progress to their next grade level next year.
  - Provincial assessments, such as provincial achievement tests, will be cancelled.
  - At this time, diploma exams essential for post-secondary acceptance will continue.
  - Every student who is eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this year will graduate. Teachers and other school staff will still be expected to work, either from home or at their workplace, to ensure these expectations are met.
  - Decisions on how to do this are still to be made, and it may vary depending on the school jurisdiction.
  - The Alberta government will also be working with post-secondary institutions to ensure that these extraordinary circumstances do not prevent students from being eligible for admission to post-secondary studies for the coming school year.
  - Post-secondary campuses will still remain open, but classes are cancelled.
- All licensed child care, out-of-school care programs and preschool programs in Alberta are closed at this time, as well.
  - Approved day homes are exempt because they care for fewer than seven children at a time. These programs are encouraged to use enhanced sanitation practices.
- The situation continues to evolve rapidly and there is no timeline at this point.

**Will school be cancelled for the rest of the year?**

- At this time, students will no longer be attending classes until further notice.
- It is too early to know how long this situation will continue.
- The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other government officials are monitoring the situation closely and will make further decisions as necessary.

**What is happening for grade 12 students and their diploma exams?**

- At this time, diploma exams essential for post-secondary acceptance will continue.
- Every student who is eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this year will graduate.
- The government will be working with post-secondary institutions to ensure that these extraordinary circumstances do not prevent students from being eligible for admission to post-secondary studies for the upcoming school year.
- We will also ensure adult learners scheduled to write diplomas exams still have an opportunity to do so.

**Can my child go to school to pick up materials and personal items?**

- We ask for your patience right now as school divisions sort out these details.
- Schools will be in touch with parents/guardians as soon as they are able.

**Will learning continue online or through other mechanisms?**

- Yes, learning will continue for students.
- The province is working with school jurisdictions across the province on the details.
- Information will be shared as soon as possible.

**What about student grades?**

- We expect every student to receive a final mark and that students will progress to their next grade level next year.
- However, provincial assessments, such as provincial achievement tests are cancelled for now.

**What are the expectations for teachers and school staff?**

- Teachers and other school staff are expected to work, either from home or at their workplace.
- School authorities are expected to continue their regular day-to-day operations and ensure the safety of our school facilities. We expect maintenance, capital projects, cleaning of facilities, and administrative work to continue.
- Decisions on how to do this are still to be made, and may vary depending on the school jurisdiction.
- We encourage school employees to speak to their employer about their specific situation.

**Does this situation change spring break?**

- Spring break will continue as scheduled in your school division.
- Schools will be closed during this time, and all staff who would normally not work during this break will continue to not work.

**Can home schooling still continue?**

- Yes. As long as health recommendations are followed, home schooling can continue.

### **What about provincial achievement tests (PATs)?**

- Every student will receive a final mark and students will progress to their next grade level next year.
- Provincial assessments, such as provincial achievement tests, will be cancelled.

### **Will teachers and support staff still get paid during the closure?**

- To be clear, we are not closing schools. Teachers and other school staff need to continue working either in school or from home to ensure content is delivered to students.
- Decisions on how exactly to do this are still to come and may vary depending on the school jurisdiction.
- School authorities are expected to continue their regular day-to-day operations and ensure the safety of school facilities. Maintenance, capital projects, cleaning of facilities, and administrative work will continue.

### **Will school boards be providing resources to parents to help them keep their kids occupied/teach them at home?**

- Teachers are still at work and student learning will continue for students.
- The province is currently working with school jurisdictions across the province to sort out the details.
- Schools will be in touch with their parents as soon as they are able.

### **If parents are considering placing their children in day homes, what should they consider?**

- If parents are considering placing their children in day homes, they should ensure that the homes are following safe guidelines as set out from Alberta Health, including:
  - Make sure handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer are available and encourage children and visitors to wash their hands frequently.
  - Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces that people regularly touch like door handles, keyboards, toilets and tables.
  - Have tissues on hand for people who start coughing or have a runny nose, as well as closed bins for hygienic disposal.
  - Advise visitors not to enter if they aren't feeling well.
  - Avoid physical contact like handshakes and hugs.
  - Discourage people from sharing food or drinks.
  - Display posters with prevention information.
  - They are aware of public resources available (like the online self-assessment tool) to help Albertans determine whether they should get tested for COVID-19.

### **I've heard rumours of un-licensed day homes opening up due to daycare closures. What are the rules around that?**

- A child care provider can have up to 6 children, not including their own children, at one time without a child care license.
- Any private provider with 7 or more children would require a child care license as per the *Child Care Licensing Act*.

### **What about post-secondary institutions (colleges, universities)?**

- Post-secondary campuses will still remain open, but classes are cancelled.

## **What is the current state of post-secondary institution (PSI) campuses (universities, colleges and technical schools)?**

- We are taking COVID-19 extremely seriously and are in close contact with Alberta's post-secondary institutions. Alberta Health remains the lead on COVID-19 response.
- In-person post-secondary classes are cancelled as institutions transition to alternate modes of delivery. Campuses will remain open.
- Many institutions have already taken steps to transition to online and remote delivery of classes – students and faculty should please pay attention to information shared by their post-secondary institution.
- Government is committed to working closely with Alberta's post-secondary institutions to find solutions and identify supports that may be required to work through COVID-19 challenges.
- At this time, all institutions are following their pandemic or emergency response plans and have stood up emergency operations centres as appropriate.
  - Coordinated response plans help ensure the safety of faculty and students.
- Advanced Education will maintain regular contact with post-secondary institutions to stay abreast of issues and concerns.

## **Will student loans be affected?**

- Advanced Education is working with post-secondary institutions and other areas of government to support student loan borrowers that may be impacted. We are also working with the Canada Student Loan Program to ensure a coordinated response and we will provide updates as they become available.

## **What will happen to Rutherford and other scholarships? Will I still be eligible? How will eligibility grades be calculated? (from the day of school closures, or end of term marks based on remote learning?)**

- We will work with Alberta Education to understand how high school grades will be calculated and provide information in advance of the application period.

## **Travel and Returning Travellers**

### **A flight attendant is isolating. Are passengers at risk?**

- It's important to remember that COVID-19 is not airborne. It is spread by droplets or touching surfaces and then touching your face, so close contact is required.
- Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats will be [posted online as information is confirmed](#). Passengers in affected seats are considered close contacts and are at risk of exposure.
  - Passengers in affected seats should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms
  - Other passengers are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms

### **What advice are you providing Albertans who want to travel?**

- We are recommending against any travel outside of the country. Given the rapid global spread of the virus, it is no longer possible to assess health risks for the duration of the trip.
- Additionally, we are recommending as of March 12th that any traveller returning from outside of the country should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- If symptoms do emerge, the individual is asked to complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

- We are making these recommendations based on the ongoing developments outside Alberta, both in the actions being taken by other jurisdictions, as well as the increasing spread of cases around the world.

### **What about families of returning travellers, do they also need to self-isolate?**

- At this time, self-isolation does not extend to family members. However family members must practice good hygiene and take precautions to reduce potential exposure.
- Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats will be [posted online as information is confirmed](#). Passengers in affected seats are considered close contacts and are at risk of exposure.
  - Passengers in affected seats should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
  - Other passengers are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms.

### **A family member returned from international travel after March 12, does the whole household need to self-isolate? What should we do?**

- At this time, self-isolation does not extend to family members. However, family members must practice good hygiene, take precautions to reduce potential exposure, and should self-isolate if symptoms emerge.
- Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats will be [posted online as information is confirmed](#). Passengers in affected seats are considered close contacts and are at risk of exposure.
  - Passengers in affected seats should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
  - Other passengers are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms.

### **I just returned from outside of Canada, what am I supposed to do?**

- Travel outside Canada is not recommended at this time. All Albertans returning from outside Canada after March 12 should self-isolate for 14 days after arrival in Canada and monitor for symptoms.
- If you recently returned from outside Canada:
  1. [self-isolate](#) for 14 days, even if you're feeling well
  2. [monitor for symptoms](#) such as cough, fever, fatigue or difficulty breathing
  3. If symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required

### **I just returned from somewhere in Canada, am I at risk, and what are my next steps?**

- If you have recently returned from somewhere in Canada, [check the list of affected flights for updates](#).
  1. [self-isolate](#) for 14 days if you were found to be in an affected seat.
  2. [monitor for symptoms](#) such as cough, fever, fatigue or difficulty breathing
  3. If symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.
- Passengers who were on the plane but not in affected seats are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms for 14 days.
  - If symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

## **How should I travel home from the airport? Should I take a taxi or airport shuttle? Will I potentially put other passengers at risk?**

- If you are well, there should be no concern.
- If you have a fever or cough or don't feel well, sit a safe distance from the driver/other passengers, if possible, cover your coughs and sneezes, and practice good hygiene. It is also recommend to wear a mask, if possible.
- Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats will be [posted online as information is confirmed](#). Passengers in affected seats are considered close contacts and are at risk of exposure.
  - Passengers in affected seats should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
  - Other passengers are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms.

## **What about people who are picking up international travelers (family, taxi/Uber drivers)?**

- If the international traveller(s) are well, there should be no concern. If they are ill, they should be kept a safe distance from other passengers, if possible. The traveller(s) should also wear a mask, if possible.
- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.
- Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats will be [posted online as information is confirmed](#). Passengers in affected seats are considered close contacts and are at risk of exposure.
  - Passengers in affected seats should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
  - Other passengers are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms.

## **I'm tourist from another Canadian province/territory. Do these rules apply to me?**

- Yes, we are recommending as of March 12th that any traveller returning from outside of the country should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
  - If symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.
- Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever or cough linked to recent travel or other health concerns should contact Health Link 811.
- Anyone who is feeling ill, even if they have not travelled, should stay home and not visit hospitals, long-term care facilities or supportive living accommodations.
  - If symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

## **How do I self-isolate if I'm staying in a bed-and-breakfast?**

- Self-isolation means avoiding situations where you could infect other people. This means all situations where you may come in contact with others, such as social gatherings, work, school/university, child care, athletic events, faith-based gatherings, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, and any public gatherings.
- You should, where possible, avoid using public transportation including buses, taxis, or ride sharing. As much as possible, you should limit your contact with people and avoid having visitors, but it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food or other things you may need.

- You can also use delivery or pick up services for errands such as grocery shopping. If you need to leave your home for an urgent errand, such as picking up essential medication, as a precaution to further reduce risk of spread, you can wear a surgical mask while you are out.

## **Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

### **Should I wear a mask to protect myself?**

- Masks can be important in certain situations. When sick, wearing a mask helps prevent us from passing illnesses on to other people. This is why we ask people who have a cough or other respiratory symptoms to wear a mask when visiting an emergency department or clinic.
- If you are healthy, medical masks are not recommended as they can give a false sense of security as they do not fully eliminate the risk of illness. Masks can easily become contaminated and need to be changed frequently and fitted properly for them to provide sufficient protection.

### **What are n95 masks? Are they required?**

- N95 masks are special protective masks that protect the wearer from airborne particles. These masks are recommended for health-care workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health-care facility). For the general public who will typically not find themselves in these settings, a N95 mask is not recommended.

### **Does the province have enough PPE? When will you run out?**

- Alberta has been preparing for months, and has a stockpile of medical equipment available.
- One of the benefits of having a single, provincial healthcare system is that we are able to quickly and effectively respond to events such as this, both at a local level and at a provincial level when necessary.
- Alberta has a stockpile of equipment and medical/surgical supplies that is pre-positioned across the province, allowing for a quick and effective provincial response.
- AHS placed and received an order for additional PPE and other equipment in January, when the virus outbreak was largely limited to China and a select number of other countries.
- The federal government has also committed to help support additional supplies across the country.
- We are working with AHS to implement processes to ensure that our existing supplies are used shared with those who need it, while also being used as effectively as possible.

### **Are all family physicians getting PPE? Why not?**

- Alberta Health and AHS are supporting family doctors with personal protective equipment.
- With the increase in global spread, and travel related cases in the province, we want to be sure that family doctors have access to personal protective equipment in a time when they are having difficulty ordering these supplies from their usual providers.
- Alberta Health Services zones will be working with primary care networks to move this forward, with priority given to those family doctors who are doing testing for COVID-19 in their offices.
- We are committed to working with physicians and other health care providers to ensure a collaborative response to the evolving COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Do clinic staffers gear up in haz mat suits or other measures?**

- At this time, the novel coronavirus appears to be spread by droplets and contact, so standard contact and droplet precautions would be taken.

- This includes the appropriate personal protective equipment such as gloves, a long-sleeved gown, surgical mask and eye protection.
- These are routine practices that are also used when treating influenza or any other severe respiratory illness.
- No additional or novel coronavirus equipment are recommended at this time.

## **Health Link 811**

### **Why are you asking people to complete a self-assessment and then call Health Link 811? Shouldn't I go to the hospital if I have symptoms?**

- Individuals with symptoms and at risk of COVID-19 (such as travellers returning from outside of Canada), should not visit emergency departments or urgent care centres to avoid potential spreading of the virus.
- Individuals with symptoms are asked to first use Alberta Health Services' simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help you decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide the individual to answer questions about their symptoms & take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.
- Calling Health Link 811 is the best way to arrange for quick assessment and testing, if required.

### **What is being done to address Health Link wait times?**

- Alberta Health Services has developed a simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help individuals decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide the individual to answer questions about their symptoms and take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.
- Health Link continues to be critical to the COVID-19 response and case management.
- Health Link is regularly receiving more than 5,700 calls. Given this volume, wait times can be high, particularly during peak times of 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 6 a.m. – 10 p.m.
- We are working hard to manage wait times. Health Link is training additional clinical staff to join the Health Link team rapidly, to provide dedicated additional COVID-19 support.
- We know that waiting times can be frustrating and thank the public for continued patience. Albertans can help the call volumes by
  - considering visiting [alberta.ca/covid](http://alberta.ca/covid) for information, if you do not need a health assessment.
  - calling Health Link during non-peak times, if possible, for those who need a health assessment.
  - if you are awaiting COVID test results, please do not call Health Link.
- Health Link does not have access to test results. If you have been tested for COVID, you will be called directly with your test results.
- It's important for Albertans to understand what COVID-19 is and what it means for them. Anyone looking for information about COVID-19, including what it means for them, how to prepare, or how to protect themselves, can find that info on [alberta.ca/COVID19](http://alberta.ca/COVID19).

## **Business and Municipalities**

### **What steps should municipalities be taking?**



- Alberta and other provinces are providing advice based on the best current evidence and guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada.
- Municipalities can find recommended public health measures [on the Government of Canada website](#).
- We have clear recommendations for mass gatherings that municipalities should follow. A mass guidance document is available online at <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-mass-gatherings.pdf>.
- Business continuity planning is vitally important to prepare critical operations for any potential interruption.
- Field officers from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency are available to support municipalities, First Nations and Metis Settlements with their emergency management and business continuity planning.

### **What steps should businesses be taking?**

- We are strongly encouraging businesses and employers to take this opportunity to review their own business continuity plans and consider how they would lower the risk of the spread of infection in the workplace.
- Appropriate steps include making sure that staff are familiar with continuity plans and that processes are in place in case of a community disruption.
- More information is available on [alberta.ca/COVID19](http://alberta.ca/COVID19).

## **Oil Sands Workers**

### **What are you doing about work camps at the oil sands?**

- We are strongly encouraging businesses and employers to take this opportunity to review their own business continuity plans and consider how they would lower the risk of the spread of infection in the workplace.
- Appropriate steps include making sure that staff are familiar with continuity plans and that processes are in place in case of a community disruption.
- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.

### **Oil sands companies fly workers from the US to work on camps, should they be self-isolated? Are you concerned about work camps?**

- We have updated our travel advice and are recommending against any travel outside of the country. This includes oil sands workers.
- Additionally, we are recommending as of March 12th that any traveller returning from outside of the country should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- If symptoms do emerge, the individual is asked to call Health Link 811 for follow-up assessment and testing. We are making these recommendations based on the ongoing developments outside Alberta, both in the actions being taken by other jurisdictions, as well as the increasing spread of cases around the world.
- We are strongly encouraging businesses and employers to take this opportunity to review their own business continuity plans and consider how they would lower the risk of the spread of infection in the workplace.

## **Food Handling**

### **What is being done to focus on food processing facilities?**

- It's important to remember COVID-19 is not a food-borne pathogen.
- This is not to dismiss the importance of all food processing facilities following appropriate food handling precautions in accordance with Food Regulations and other applicable provincial and federal legislation.
  - Precautions include cleanliness, good personal hygiene, and proper hand washing as often as necessary to prevent contamination of food or food areas.
- In addition, the Chief Medical Officer of Health has recommended that any Albertan who is ill with influenza-like symptoms such as fever or cough stay at home for 14 days if they are sick.

### **Emergency Preparedness and Pandemic Planning**

#### **Have you increased emergency protocols?**

- The Alberta government and AHS are both using our emergency response processes to help coordinate communication and planning to ensure we are prepared to respond effectively to any cases that might arrive in Alberta.
- The Provincial Operations Centre is at a Level 3 (of 4) to assist in that coordination.

#### **Does Alberta have a pandemic plan in place? Is it still accurate/applicable for this virus?**

- We are prepared for any future situation that may arise around the novel coronavirus.
- Our province has an Alberta Pandemic Influenza Plan that is ready to use if needed.
- Alberta Health continually reviews and updates the Alberta Pandemic Influenza Plan, including practice exercises and planning done multiple times throughout the year.
- The plan was developed by Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, and the Alberta Emergency Management Agency.
- This plan would be used to guide a response provincially to a pandemic influenza outbreak, and relevant sections could also be used to guide a pandemic of another infectious agent.
- In 2019, the pandemic influenza plan was the basis of a series of provincial emergency management exercises to practice the Government of Alberta's pandemic preparedness and response processes.

#### **What funding is allocated for pandemic planning and response?**

- Alberta has a robust pandemic plan, led by Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, coordinated by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, and supported by all departments, that has already been exercised and recently updated.
- We have not budgeted anything specifically for COVID-19, but preparations and planning across government are already well underway to ensure we are well prepared.
- Should COVID-19 arrive and become a significant issue in Alberta, we can use the \$750 million contingency fund for disasters and other contingencies to support response measures.
- On March 15, government committed an additional \$500 million to the COVID-19 response. The new funding will ensure front-line health professionals have the tools they need for testing, surveillance and treatment of patients as the province works to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Our government will also take any necessary additional measures to help ensure the health, safety, and economic security of Alberta.

### **Should people be hoarding food or stocking up on supplies?**

- It is always best practice for individuals to have at least three days worth of supplies on hand, whether due to sickness, an ice storm, or a pandemic situation.
- A basic emergency kit should include water, non-perishable food items, toiletries, medication and other items.
- For more information on how to be prepared for emergencies, go to: <https://www.alberta.ca/build-an-emergency-kit.aspx>
- Outside of this best practice, we are not advising that Albertans change their approach to managing household supplies at this time.
- The best thing that people can do to be prepared is to build habits of regular hand washing, avoiding touching their face with unwashed hands, staying home when sick, and covering their coughs and sneezes.

### **What services are available right now to support Government of Alberta staff to work remotely?**

- Service Alberta already provides the following services to facilitate mobile or work-from-home capabilities for Government of Alberta (GoA) staff:
  - GoA-managed mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets are setup with the ability to access GoA emails and other services.
  - GoA-managed laptops can be setup with the ability to connect remotely to the GoA network through secure software.
    - This can be requested from the Service Desk.
  - Video conferencing facilities are available to all staff through instant messaging, webinar hosting, and other tools.
  - Users can connect to the GoA environment from their own home systems through our secure Citrix environment.

### **Are you ramping up cleaning in government buildings?**

- Employees should always maintain clean work stations and offices.
- We are ensuring that soap and hand sanitizer stations are kept full.
- Regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors and customers is required at all times to keep our workplaces safe from the spread of germs.
- We are monitoring the situation very closely and working with our partners at Alberta Health.
- Cleaning will be adjusted appropriately when necessary.

## **PRICE GOUGING**

### **What about price-gouging in the retail market? We've seen reports about people buying up stockpiles of critical supplies and selling them at a premium, or stores jacking their prices for things like sanitizer and toilet paper. What are you doing to protect consumers?**

- Our hope and expectation would be for everyone, including individuals and retailers, to behave ethically during this situation.
- Under the *Consumer Protection Act*, sellers cannot grossly raise prices with no explanation above what is reasonable for goods that are readily available.

- Albertans can make formal complaints to the Consumer Investigations Unit through the government website.

## **COURTS and CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES**

### **Are courts shutting down?**

- The Alberta Court of Queen's Bench has made the decision to postpone jury trials and jury selections until May 31.
- Decisions regarding the business continuity of government or court operations during a pandemic are informed by Alberta's public health officials.
- There are business continuity plans for court operation, and the plans continue to be reviewed in light of recent events and any direction from Alberta's public health officials.
- If and when daily operations are impacted, court officials will make the needed arrangements as appropriate.
- Speculation on what these arrangements could include is inappropriate, as the decisions made would be based on the specific circumstances at the time. Similarly, safety and security precautions limit the details that can be shared as well.
- For up to date information of court proceedings, please visit:  
<https://albertacourts.ca/qb/resources/announcements/novel-coronavirus-outbreak>

### **What steps are in place to protect individuals in prisons or jails?**

- We and all of our partners across Alberta have been, and continue to plan for every possible scenario.
- As part of this work, AHS has a plan in place to minimize any risk presented by COVID-19, to either prisoners or Corrections staff.
- This plan mirrors what we currently do to minimize the risk presented by influenza, and is similar to how we would respond to a confirmed case in the general public.
- Isolation procedures are in place, and AHS is in close contact with Medical Directors of Correctional Health Services in other provinces, as well as Corrections Canada, regarding approaches to manage COVID-19 should it appear in correctional facilities.
- All partners will continue to adapt their approach in the days to come, taking guidance from the health recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

### **Are correctional facilities still allowing visitors?**

- Effective March 16, family, professional and volunteer visits to all Alberta provincial correctional facilities and young offender centres have been suspended.
- If defence counsel requires an in-person meeting, arrangements may be made, dependent on operational, hygiene and safety considerations.
- We will continue to closely monitor the situation, and take additional steps as necessary.
- When it comes to protecting Albertans, we will continue to consider all options.
- Correctional Services staff in collaboration with Alberta Health Services will continue to provide support and health services to inmates and youth in all Alberta Provincial Correctional facilities and Young Offender Centres.

### **Have there been any cases inside a remand centre or correctional facility?**

- To date there have been no confirmed COVID-19 coronavirus cases in any of the provincial correctional, remand or young offender centers.

## **MASS GATHERINGS**

### **What constitutes a mass gathering?**

- A mass gathering is any event or assembling that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, theater, or any other confined indoor or confined outdoor space.
- As of March 15, this definition also includes places of worship as part of our recommendations on mass gatherings.
- Mass gatherings do not include normal operations at airports and shopping malls, or other spaces people may be moving or walking about as part of normal activities of daily living. It also does not include typical office environments or retail or grocery stores where large numbers of people are present.
- For more information, a mass gathering fact sheet is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-mass-gatherings.pdf>

### **Why are organizers being asked to cancel mass gatherings? What types of events are being cancelled?**

- We are taking COVID-19 extremely seriously, and acting quickly to minimize risk and keep Albertans safe and healthy.
- In light of the extraordinary circumstances, we are issuing recommendations on mass gatherings to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.
- Effective immediately, health officials are asking all large gatherings or international events in the province to be cancelled and advising Albertans against travel outside of the country.
- Alberta is asking organizers to cancel any events that have more than 250 attendees. This includes large sporting events, conferences and community events. It does not extend to grocery stores, airports or shopping centres.
- Any event that has more than 50 attendees and expects to have international participants, or involves critical infrastructure staff, seniors, or other high-risk populations should also be cancelled.
- Events that do not meet these criteria can proceed, but risk mitigation must be in place such as sanitizer stations and distancing between attendees.

### **What about international events?**

- Effective immediately, the Alberta government is asking all large gatherings or international events in the province to be cancelled and advising Albertans against travel outside of the country.
- Any event that has more than 50 attendees and expects to have international participants, or involves critical infrastructure staff, seniors, or other high-risk populations should also be cancelled.
- Travel outside of the country is not being recommended 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.

### **What about grocery stores and shopping centres, etc.? These places are likely to be busier than usual with people stocking up on supplies. Should they be avoided?**

- At this time, the public health restrictions do not extend to grocery stores, airports or shopping centres.

- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.
- It's important to remember that COVID-19 is not airborne. It is spread by droplets or touching surfaces and then touching your face, so close contact is required.
- In the event of someone testing positive for COVID-19, or being a close contact, AHS will contact anyone at risk.
- Please visit [alberta.ca/COVID19](https://alberta.ca/COVID19) for up-to-date information.

### **Can I continue going to daily prayer service at my place of worship?**

- We are taking COVID-19 extremely seriously, and acting quickly to minimize risk and keep Albertans safe and healthy.
- In light of the extraordinary circumstances, we have issued recommendations on mass gatherings to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.
- Places of worship are no longer exempt from the recommended restrictions on mass gatherings. Public health officials continue to recommend that all mass gatherings of 250 people or more are cancelled, and this now includes worship gatherings.
- We understand how this might impact Albertans' way of life, but we need to make this difficult decision to help keep us all healthy and safe.

### **What about long-term care facilities? Can I still go and visit my family members?**

- We are taking COVID-19 extremely seriously, and acting quickly to minimize risk and keep Albertans safe and healthy.
  - Only essential visits to any continuing care or long-term care facility in Alberta are recommended:
  - Individuals over 60 years of age and those with pre-existing health conditions are most at risk of severe symptoms from COVID-19.
  - Families and friends of those in these facilities to think of other ways besides visiting that they can support and encourage their loved ones through this difficult time.

### **What about visits to congregate living sites?**

- Effective immediately, we are restricting visitors to all congregate living sites.
- Residents are at extreme risk if exposed to COVID – 19.
- We are asking that visitors are restricted to one or two people at a time and that those visitors be immediate family or designated support persons only.
- This will reduce the risk of loved ones being exposed to Covid-19.
- We ask you to also restrict visitation of children as children do not necessarily show symptoms of COVID-19.
- If you are ill with fever, cough or sore throat, please do not visit.
- If you have any symptoms, and if there is an absolute critical need for visitation to occur, such as in an end of life situation, visitors need to be equipped with PPE suitable for droplet and contact precautions, escorted to and from the room, and must not stop to visit with any other residents either before or after visiting loved-ones.

### **Should businesses consider shutting down/closing their doors while the mass gathering restrictions are in place?**

- Alberta Health has not recommended that any businesses close to protect the public health from COVID-19.

- However, businesses should self-assess and find alternate ways to organize large group meetings, or employ mitigation strategies to limit risk.
- For more information, a mass gathering information sheet is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-mass-gatherings.pdf>.
- All municipalities, businesses and other organizations should continue business continuity planning to prepare critical operations for any potential interruption.
- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.

### **What about smaller events like weddings, birthday parties, meetings, etc.? Should these types of events still proceed?**

- Smaller events with 50 or less people can still proceed, but risk mitigation must be in place, such as:
  - Reducing the number of participants or changing the venue to prevent crowding;
  - Recommend those at high-risk of severe disease not attend the event;
  - Staggering arrivals and departures;
  - Providing packaged refreshments instead of a buffet;
  - Increasing access to handwashing stations;
  - Clean surfaces often that are frequently touched;
  - Promoting personal protective practices (hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill);
  - Offering virtual or live - streamed activities; and
  - Changing the event program to reduce high risk activities such as those that require physical contact between participants
- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.

### **Should I still go to work?**

- Practicing good hygiene is the most important thing that Albertans can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes cleaning your hands regularly, avoiding touching your face, and staying home and away from others if you are sick.
- Anyone with specific health questions or concerns should call Health Link at 811 for assessment and health advice.

### **How will you enforce the restrictions on mass gatherings?**

- The coming weeks are vital in our fight to protect Alberta from COVID-19.
- We are calling on every Albertan and organization to assist our public health efforts and do their very best to comply with the public health guidance.

## **Jubilee Auditoria**

### **How long will the Jubilee Auditoria be closed?**

- We are uncertain at this time how long the Auditoria will be closed.
- We will continue to monitor the situation and follow the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- We will provide updates to our website and social media channels as they become available.

### **Are you closing because a visitor or staff member tested positive for COVID-19?**

- We closed based on the recommendations to cancel mass gatherings over 250 people by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- At this time we have no confirmed cases of COVID-19 related to the Jubilee Auditoria.

### **How will we be refunded for shows that are cancelled?**

- If your show has been cancelled, and you purchased your ticket through TicketMaster, you will be notified via e-mail and provided options for a refund.
- If your show has been rescheduled, hang onto your tickets and they will be honoured for the new performance date.
  - It may take a few days to determine if your show has been cancelled or rescheduled, so please be patient as this situation evolves.

### **When will I know if a show booked later in the year is cancelled?**

- There are two ways you will be notified about a show cancellation as that information becomes available:
  - The first is through our website and social media channels;
  - The second is through an e-mail from TicketMaster advising of your options for a refund, or holding on to your tickets in the event the show is rescheduled.

### **Will my graduation ceremony at the Jubilee Auditoria be cancelled?**

- It is too early to confirm cancellations into April, May and June.
- We will be working closely with your school to review our options that may include cancellation, rescheduling, or proceeding if the situation approves.

## **Historic Sites and Museums**

### **Are the historic sites and museums going to close because of COVID-19?**

- At this time, no provincial sites are closed.
- The safety of our visitors, staff and volunteers is our top priority.
- For non-provincial sites, we encourage you to check with the facility or the municipality to determine whether a location is closing.
- Alberta is taking COVID-19 extremely seriously and acting quickly to minimize risk and keep people in Alberta safe.
- Authorities are closely monitoring the situation and will determine if additional precautions are needed.

### **What are historic sites and museums doing to stop the spread?**

- The safety of our patrons and staff is our top priority. We are actively reviewing our operations to respond to the situation.
  - Our facilities have increased their cleaning schedules, especially in high traffic areas.
  - All staff and patrons have access to hand sanitizer and hand washing facilities.
  - Our washroom locations are well signed, and we encourage our patrons to wash their hands regularly during their visit.
- We encourage all Albertans to follow Alberta Health Services guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
  - Practising good hygiene is the most important thing Albertans can do.



- This includes cleaning your hands regularly with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, avoiding touching your face, and staying home and away from others if you are sick.
- We will continue to monitor the situation to determine if additional precautions are needed.

#### **Are the hands-on elements at historic sites and museums being cleaned regularly?**

- Yes.
- As an added precaution, we are closing access to specific hands-on elements that cannot be cleaned as thoroughly, e.g. the beads in the Big Machine in our Children's Gallery.
- In addition, all staff and patrons have access to hand sanitizer and hand washing facilities; we recommend patrons make use of these stations during their visit.

#### **Are school trips, camp-ins and tours going to be cancelled?**

- All school classes have been cancelled, so there will be no school trips occurring.
- We have not cancelled any other kinds of tours at this time.
  - We will work with group organizers to help them make the most appropriate decision for them.
  - We will continue to monitor the situation to determine if additional precautions are needed.

#### **Are Facility Rentals being cancelled?**

- The museum is honouring existing bookings and is continuing to take bookings. However, bookings over 250 people will not be permitted, and restrictions are in place for booking between 50 and 250 people.
- If clients have any concerns, they should contact the museum's Facility Rentals office.
- We will continue to monitor the situation to determine if additional precautions are needed.

#### **Volunteers at historic sites and museums generally tend to be older in age. Should they be staying away from sites and museums – for their own safety, and the safety of patrons?**

- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.
- We are working closely with volunteers to stay informed of the situation, and if needed, will determine the appropriate decision for them.

*For sites with food services or bars*

#### **Are you going to close the café/restaurant/bar?**

- There has been no recommendation by Alberta Health or Alberta Health Services to close food service facilities at this time.
- We are introducing preventative measures as a precaution, including:
  - Increasing sanitation and cleaning practices;
  - Denying refills on reusable mugs and cups; and
  - Increasing table and chair cleaning.
- We will continue to monitor the situation to determine if additional precautions, such as transitioning to disposable cutlery and dinnerware or closing our food services, is needed.

*For the Royal Alberta Museum*

### **What about the Children's Gallery? Will it close?**

- The Children's Gallery is not closed, but because of the number of hands-on elements, we have taken extra precautions to ensure it is a clean environment.
  - Our facilities have increased their cleaning schedules – this includes the Children's Gallery.
  - All plush materials have been removed.
  - The sand table has been emptied and will remain empty for the time being.
  - The beads in the Big Machine have been removed and it will remain empty for the time being.
- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing, and should stay home if feeling ill.
- We will continue to monitor the situation to determine if additional precautions are needed.

### **Are any programs being cancelled at the museum?**

- Yes. We cancelled the March 15 Sensory Sunday, and are postponing the 'Up Close' talk series.
- We will be in touch with more information when it becomes available.

## **BLOOD DONATIONS**

### **Can people still donate blood during the pandemic?**

- The need for blood donors remains strong. It is safe to donate blood during COVID-19 and donations can help save lives.
- Blood donor centres across Canada are places of wellness within Canada's health system.
- Blood donation can help address the feeling of helplessness people have in the face of COVID-19. Gaining a sense of control during this situation can help contribute to an overall sense of wellbeing.
- To learn more, visit Canadian Blood Services website at: [blood.ca](http://blood.ca)

## **BILLING CODE FOR DOCTORS**

### **Is there a new billing code for doctors to use when they are dealing with COVID-19 remotely?**

- Alberta Health has activated a billing code, known as 03.01AD, which was also used during the H1N1 response. Physicians have received a bulleting on the code which will allow them to bill for phone calls they are receiving regarding COVID-19.

## **SPECIFIC CASES**

### **We've gotten tips about a case? Is this accurate?**

- We cannot comment on any rumour or provide information regarding specific cases, due to patient confidentiality.
- Alberta's health professionals are processing a very high volume of COVID-19 test results. We are providing results to people waiting as quickly as possible, however given the high volume, there can be delays. Our target is 48 hours.
- People who have been tested will be contacted directly with their results.

- Anyone who has been tested will have been told to self-isolate until they receive their results, in order to reduce the risk of transmission. It is extremely important that they follow these instructions.
- There are 19 confirmed cases in Alberta at this time.
- If that changes, we will promptly alert Albertans. We are being fully transparent and sharing information with Albertans when it becomes available.