

GOVERNMENT OF NEW BRUNSWICK UPDATE

Bulletin #4 e: COVID-19 GNB news releases from March 18

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Update on COVID-19

FREDERICTON (GNB) – Dr. Jennifer Russell, chief medical officer of health, is directing New Brunswickers to stay home and engage in proper social distancing practices to help slow the spread of COVID-19 (the novel coronavirus).

“It is up to us to take actions that will slow the spread of the virus, and give our doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals the best chance to cope with its impact,” said Russell. “The outbreak of COVID-19 can be stressful for people and communities. It is natural to feel distress, anxiety, grief, and worry during and after a stressful situation.”

Russell said there are actions individuals can take to support themselves and their families:

- Connect with others while maintaining safe social distancing - Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Check-in regularly with loved ones, especially those affected by the virus.
- Take breaks - Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try to do activities you usually enjoy. Maintain a sense of hope and think positively.
- Get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well.

Testing has identified three additional presumptive cases of COVID-19, bringing the number of presumptive or positive cases in New Brunswick to 11.

The three new cases are:

- a female, between 60 and 70, in zone 1 (southeast) who had been on a cruise;
- a male, between 60 and 70, in zone 3 (central) who had been in contact with an individual who had direct contact with a traveller; and
- a female, between 50 and 60, in zone 3 (central) who had travelled to the United Kingdom.

Additional testing to confirm the cases will take place at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.

Premier Blaine Higgs implored New Brunswickers to heed recommendations from Dr. Russell and the Public Health team.

“People should stay home whenever possible, I cannot stress that enough,” said Higgs. “No play dates; no sleepovers; family visits only when required. Enjoy the fresh air, but avoid doing it in groups, and keep six feet away from others when you absolutely need to go somewhere.”

Higgs said these measures are designed to flatten the curve and reduce the impact of the virus. He also thanked New Brunswickers who continue to provide essential services.

“There are those on the front lines of our health-care system, but there are also people like the truck drivers who are making sure goods get to our stores, the staff working in those stores and keeping the shelves stocked, and the people working behind the scenes every day to enable us to continue to get these important updates to you,” he said. “They are leaving their families at home and in service to the greater good. We need to do what we can to help them stay healthy and safe, and that means we must stay at home as much as possible.”

Higgs stressed the importance of following the advice of health professionals to protect New Brunswickers, especially the more vulnerable residents. He warned that if people do not act as advised, additional measures may need to be taken to ensure that everyone follows the Public Health recommendations.

Other information related to the response to the virus includes:

Pharmacies

Pharmacists are considering the long-term needs of New Brunswickers and wish to ensure that medications are dispensed responsibly during this uncertain time. Providing patients with a 30-day supply of medication will help them continue to ensure a stable supply for patients. Requesting early refills unless absolutely necessary or stockpiling medications could create unintended drug shortages and put the health of other patients at risk.

In order to help keep pharmacists and their staff healthy, New Brunswickers are asked not to go to any pharmacy if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, new onset of cough or difficulty breathing), in the 14 days after the onset of symptoms or if they think they have been exposed to the virus.

Food Security

The Department of Social Development is in constant contact with food banks, soup kitchens, agencies such as Meals on Wheels and similar organizations, to ensure the continued provision of services. If volunteers are needed, many civil servants are available and have offered to help. If these organizations experience an influx of new clients, the department will provide additional financial support.

Shelters for the homeless

The Department of Social Development is working closely with shelters for the homeless to encourage best practices in preventing the onset and spread of the virus. The shelters are reinforcing safe hygiene practices, including constant handwashing, among the clients and staff are cleaning the shelters thoroughly.

Most shelters are operating at or near capacity, but plans are being finalized to provide temporary separate accommodations in the event a shelter client becomes ill with COVID 19.

Canadian Red Cross

As part of its efforts to encourage social distancing and mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the Canadian Red Cross will close its offices and branches to the public by the end of day, March 18. Regarding the Health Equipment Loan Program, delivery services are by appointment only between 9 a.m. and noon, if absolutely necessary.

New Brunswick courts

New Brunswick courts are closed to the public except for those people necessary to the proceedings including counsel, litigants, accused, witnesses, victim service workers and members of the media. No one who is experiencing any COVID-19 related symptoms should attend. Information related to the courts [is available online](#).

Businesses

Information specific to businesses [is available online](#) and will be updated as more information becomes available. Businesses impacted by sudden shifts in the economy are encouraged you to get in touch with their local Opportunities NB office, or by emailing info@onbcanda.ca.

Daycares

Higgs said parents will not be charged while daycares are closed to their children and said essential service workers, whose children are at daycares, will continue to pay their regular rate.

“We are asking daycare operators not to increase their usual rates at this time,” he said. “Today the federal government announced relief for small businesses. We are working to determine how this applies to daycares, but we are committed to closing the gaps.”

Federal government initiatives

Higgs noted the federal government today announced a new set of economic measures to help stabilize the economy.

“These measures will provide up to \$27 billion in direct support to Canadian workers and businesses,” he said. “As this was just announced, we need to determine the role New Brunswick will play in this. As we learn more, we will share the information.”

Higgs said he was pleased that Canada and the United States have agreed to collaborate on mutually restricting discretionary travel across the border.

“I was relieved to hear during a call with Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and all the premiers, that this will not impact essential travel and trade, including trucking,” he said. “Specifically, we were given assurances that they are making progress to find a way to minimize the impact on Campobello Island.”