

**To:** All employees

**From:** Maura McKinnon, Chief Human Resource Officer

**Date:** March 15, 2020

**Re:** **Bulletin 1a: COVID-19 - Protecting ourselves and others**

As you are aware, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a public health emergency related to COVID-19 (coronavirus) and we have had the first confirmed case of COVID-19 identified in NB.

We all have a role to play in [protecting ourselves and others](#) and limiting the spread of the virus. Practicing proper hygiene and staying home if sick or feeling unwell are important ways to prevent the spread of respiratory illness. Practice social distancing (including at work): avoid organizing or attending large gatherings in person, use phone and teleconferencing tools rather than in-person meetings, avoid shaking hands.

### How does the virus spread?


The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) states that the virus is transmitted through:

- respiratory droplets generated when you cough or sneeze;
- **close (within 2 metres) and prolonged personal contact;**
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.

The risk of infection is greater in environments with close and prolonged contact, like family dwellings, than workplaces. Nonetheless, we need to take precautions in the workplace.

### Personal hygiene

We remind you to adopt the recommended [personal hygiene practices](#):

- wash your hands often with soap and water (only use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable);
  - sneeze/cough into your elbow or into tissues (and throw away);
  - avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth with your hands;
  - avoid social contact with sick persons; and
  - stay at home if you are even mildly sick.
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### Occupational hygiene guidelines

The [workplace hygiene guidelines](#) issued by WorksafeNB to help control the spread of respiratory viruses are simple and straightforward:

- clean surfaces that are frequently touched by hands; and
- clean shared workstations and equipment.

Our organization is working to ensure these standards are met. You can take similar cleaning measures at home. The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends cleaning high-touch surfaces like toys, toilets, phones, door handles, remote controls with regular household cleaners or diluted bleach (1 part bleach to 9 parts water).


### Work-related gatherings

You may have already seen the [March 12 update](#) issued by Dr. Jennifer Russell, chief medical officer of health, in which she recommends social distancing measures such as cancelling or postponing non-essential mass gatherings (150 or more people) until public health officials are able to better determine the risk to our population.

Dr. Russell's update also includes recommendations to reduce infection risks when organizing smaller gatherings which I want to highlight for you as well:

- avoiding shaking hands
- practicing proper hygiene;
- discouraging attendees from sharing food or drinks;
- increasing social distance between others (ideally to two meters) by broadcasting events or offering virtual participation;
- eliminating buffet style eating;
- encouraging people who are ill or those with high-risk medical conditions not to attend gatherings; and
- communicating clearly to attendees about the risks and directing them to this advice on reducing the spread of illness.

If you return from any out-of-province travel, we ask that you please self-monitor closely for symptoms. We also encourage everyone to practice caution – if feeling unwell for any reason, it is safest to stay home until you feel better. ***To decrease pressure on our health care system, we are waiving any requirement for medical notes for the purpose of sick leave for the time being.***



Across government and within our organization, teams have been working together diligently to monitor the situation and make necessary preparations, including contingency planning for our critical services in the case of a pandemic. As circumstances have and may continue to change rapidly, please know that we are prepared to activate and adjust these plans as necessary.

As your employer, we recognize that the outbreak has the potential to impact both your work and personal obligations, and we thank you for your continued patience, support, and adherence to any current and future directives.

We are committed to keeping you updated and we encourage you to refer to Skyline regularly for current information on the situation, and for important ways we can prepare in the event of an emergency including preventative measures to help stay healthy and prevent the spread of illness. On [Skyline](#), you will find employee bulletins on significant developments, and information on available resources for you and your family members through the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#).

If you have any questions regarding current directives, leave provisions, or available resources, please reach out to your Human Resources for more information.

