

Courtesy translation of letter sent from Jean-Francois Roberge, Quebec's Minister of Education and Higher Education to all Educational Leaders in Quebec.

March 26, 2020

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last Sunday, the Government of Quebec announced the extension of the closure of all schools in Quebec until May 1 inclusively, due to the risk related to COVID-19.

Following the communications that have already reached you, I would like to make a few clarifications for the period beginning March 30.

Obviously, I am aware that other precisions will be necessary in the face of this unprecedented situation for the Quebec school network. In this sense, other updates will be sent to you so that we can all have the clearest and most appropriate guidelines.

Ministerial exams

First of all, I would like to remind you that, in view of the situation, all ministerial reviews for the year 2019-2020 are cancelled. I would also like to recall that the school year 2019-2020 is not in jeopardy, even if the health situation would require the closure of schools after May 1st. In any case, the teachers' professional judgement, based on the assessments made before the closure of the schools, will enable them to prepare the final report cards. Further details on the preparation of the final report cards may be communicated to you at a later date.

I would remind you that the activities that will be made available will be aimed primarily at consolidating student learning during the closing period and that they remain optional.

Although important, these contents are optional and cannot be evaluated under any circumstances.

Educational contents and school continuity

As you know, from March 30th, optional pedagogical activities will be gradually offered from online platforms and public television, with the aim of continuing to stimulate student learning. We invite you to make these services available to parents in your area.

Also, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education will be sending you a weekly activity kit starting on April 6th, which we will ask you to send to the school administrations in your board who will then be able to pass on the information to their school team. The kit will contain suggestions for educational activities for preschool, elementary and secondary levels. They can also be improved or adapted, if desired, before being sent to the parents.

Administration and school principals are called upon to mobilise all their staff to participate in the necessary psychological and pedagogical support of the students, and this, by showing flexibility and by taking into account the personal situations of each one.

Vulnerable students

The staff of the school teams, supported by the school management, are also invited, as far as possible, to carry out a personalised weekly follow-up with the of its students, prioritizing those that they consider to be the most vulnerable, either by telephone or various technological means that allow a direct contact (video messagine services, etc.). If the use of these options is impossible, an e-mail could be sent to parents, urging them to contact the resource person.

In the same spirit, we invite professionals and support staff that accompanied students in maintaining contact with the people under their care - responsibility prior to the closure of the facilities on March 13 and to co-ordinate their interventions with students, in conjunction with teachers and other members of the school team. These follow-ups can be done according to the same terms and conditions than those applicable by the teaching staff.

Access to schools

Exceptionally, until May 1, only school administration personnel will be able to access to their school, for example to retrieve tools to help them support their team and coordinate their efforts remotely. Otherwise, the facilities will remain closed to staff and the public.

School leaders must prepare the recovery of personal and school belongings that are absolutely necessary, taking into account has strict hygiene rules. This activity must be spread out over time and must be coordinated in such a way as to banish contact and proximity between people. In the invitation sent to the parents, remind them of the Public Health regulations related to displacement in a context of social distancing. It is also necessary to ensure that that the necessary sanitary measures, including the cleaning of visitors' hands, are taken, are systematically observed. This operation should provide an opportunity to lend computer equipment to families, with priority given to students with special needs or those living in disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. This operation should ideally be completed no later than Friday, April 17, 2020.

It is desirable that the teaching materials of the schools be made available to the parents who request it. We invite you now to make an inventory of the various resources available (laptops, tablets, textbooks, etc.)

Working conditions for the public sector

As mentioned earlier, we ask all staff to not go to their workplaces and to promote working from home "teleworking". I would like to point out also that the remuneration of all regular staff is maintained.

Remuneration is also maintained for temporary employees based on already known and scheduled times until May 1.

Vocational training and adult education

We are aware of the specific challenges with respect to general education and vocational training. In this context, we invite you to flexibility and to encourage, wherever possible, the recognition of prior learning to award diplomas, attestations and certifications, any by taking advantage of distance learning initiatives.

Status of administrative centres

The administrative centres are maintaining essential activities. In that meaning, they remain open until May 1 2020. However, it is requested that the staff work remotely, whenever possible.

As previously mentioned, I am aware that more details will have to be brought forth. If you haven't already done so, I invite you to report any questions. We will endeavour to answer as best we can.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank you for your extraordinary collaboration. Your mobilization is inspiring and must be commended. Together, we will overcome this crisis.

Please accept, ladies and gentlemen, my best regards.
The Minister of Education and Higher Education,

Jean-François Roberge