

*Courtesy translation of letter sent from Eric Blackburn, Quebec's Deputy Minister of Education and Higher Education to all schools in Quebec.*

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Quebec City, March 12, 2020

To Educational Leaders -

The current situation regarding COVID-19 is of great concern. The World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared pandemic status for COVID-19 last Wednesday. In order to limit the spread of the virus, several countries have already imposed entry restrictions on travelers from certain areas. For its part, the priority of the Government of Quebec is the health and safety, not only of the citizens and its employees, but also of those who work in its partner organizations, including yours. In this context, the Government of Quebec today issued new directives.

Thus, from a preventive perspective and wishing to protect services to the population, trips outside Canada of all employees of the Government of Quebec which were to be carried out in the exercise of their functions are no longer authorized from this day, and this, until further notice.

In coherence with this directive, I specify to you that this preventive measure must be implemented from now on in your organization, and this, for the interest of all the people under your responsibility as well as for the well-being of the population in general.

This measure also applies to all trips outside Canada of your students for various purposes, including school trips, internships, student exchanges, international programs, competitions and seminars. At the same time, I ask you to postpone international students arriving from foreign countries to be welcomed in your establishment after today, and to quickly inform the people concerned so as to avoid displacements.

From now on, if a member your staff returns from a stay outside Canada, you must make the necessary arrangements for that person to comply with a period of self-isolation of 14 days, as prescribed by Public Health. During these two weeks, the salary of this person must be maintained.

Compulsory isolation therefore does not apply to persons who have traveled during the past few days, in particular during the break week which ended on March 8th. However, these people must closely monitor their symptoms during the 14 days following their return to Quebec. In case of symptoms, they should isolate themselves immediately and contact 1 877 644-4545.

We are counting on your collaboration to remind staff members, parents, and adult students, the importance of informing the management of the establishment if they have been in contact with a person having visited a country at risk or if they themselves are staying there.

As the Premier announced today, all indoor gatherings of 250 or more people in the same room are prohibited, for example an activity organized in a cafeteria, an agora, a classroom, a sports center, etc. . It is up to each organization to modify the usual practices of a pedagogical, administrative or recreational nature and to adapt them to the new requirements (modification of schedule, double period of meals, alternative training methods, etc.).

The assessment of the risks of particular cases must be made by your regional directorate of public health, which has the mandate to recommend the best actions to take in each of these situations, as well by the parents and by the students and the managers of the establishments. . Please note that in accordance with the recommendations of the Directorate of Public Health, if a case is confirmed in an establishment of the education network, we will immediately close it for a minimum duration of 14 days or until that all of the students and staff members have been seen.

As you can see, the situation is changing rapidly. Consequently, particular situations, including the possibility of closing one or the other of your establishments, we count on your precious collaboration to inform us beforehand. To this end, you can contact Mr. Jonathan Simard at [jonathan.simard@education.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:jonathan.simard@education.gouv.qc.ca).

Finally, where the decisions which will be taken will cause costs, compensatory modalities will be determined according to the various situations.

I ask you to inform all of the people affected by these measures without delay. Thank you and I ask you to receive, Madam, Sir, our best regards.

The Deputy Minister of Education and Higher Education,  
Eric Blackburn