

Dear Surrey School District staff,

This has been an unprecedented 24 hours in an already unprecedented time. On Wednesday, COVID-19 was confirmed as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and we've seen a sweeping set of societal and cultural changes that directly impact our personal and professional worlds. I want to take a moment to address what this means for our district.

Our top priority is to keep all of you and your families safe, healthy and informed.

In the past 24 hours we've seen increased guidance put in place by government and health leaders in many regions of the world to further prevent potential exposure and spread of the coronavirus. Here in British Columbia, our Provincial Health Officer (PHO) announced new directives and measures to help protect our communities:

- British Columbians should avoid all non-essential international travel, including to the United States.
- Anyone who travels outside Canada is being asked to stay away from school or work for 14 days upon return.
- Event organizers should cancel any gathering larger than 250 people.

In this environment, for the health of our staff, students and families and for the broader role we play in our communities, it is critical that we follow the directives of public health.

Many of you will have made international travel plans for spring break. **If you willingly travel outside of Canada against the advice of the Provincial Health Officer, you are effectively making yourself unavailable for work for 14 days upon your return.** It is important to know that sick leave may not be available for staff in these circumstances. The Provincial Health Officer is asking all British Columbians to comply with this travel ban as part of our civic duty to stem the spread of COVID-19.

There has also been some discussion around school closures. The Provincial Health Officer advises that closing schools is not appropriate or advised at this time. There currently are no plans to extend spring break. Public health officials and the Ministry of Education will be working with school districts during spring break to continue monitoring the pandemic and any further measures that may be required.

I'd also like to ask you to start thinking about continuity of business operations and educational programs. Every situation is unique, but please give some thought as to how your work, in whatever role, can continue should the situation change over spring break and you be asked to work from home. We are actively exploring many alternatives in the current circumstances.

The World Health Organization in declaring a pandemic has stated that it will take a collective resolve by each of us to manage through these times. We know the above has a substantial impact on not only ourselves, but our families and community. We also know information is changing daily. Thank you for your patience and please continue to monitor our website for additional information as it emerges.

In closing, please stay healthy and we hope you do indeed manage to have a restful spring break.

Thank you,



Jordan Tinney
Superintendent of Schools/CEO

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