

March 4, 2020

Dear SD 8 - Kootenay Lake Staff and Families,

We are writing to give you updated information on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-covid-19>
The highest number of infections continue to be reported from Hubei Province, China, and Northern Italy.

There have been a small number of cases of COVID-19 in B.C. which are being very closely managed. We are now aware of early evidence that this virus can cause a range of mild to severe symptoms, and it is possible that people will not recognize symptoms that are mild. During this time, people can reduce the chance of spread by limiting contact with others.

Our knowledge of the coronavirus continues to grow, and we are using public health information from Interior Health to inform our recommendations, especially regarding international travel over the March Spring Break.
<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/CommunicableDiseaseControl/Pages/Breaking-News-and-Info.aspx>

As per the current Canadian government travel advisory, both non-essential travel and all travel to Asia or other fast-growing outbreak countries, such as Northern Italy, is to be avoided. **To that end, the Board of Education and District has supported the postponing of two Spring Break trips to Europe (that included Northern Italy) until the threat of COVID-19 is gone.** While we understand the immediate disappointment to students, staff, and families, we felt we could not support risking infection, plane delays, and possible quarantine on either side of the ocean.

Hence, our suggestions for **Spring Break travel** are as follows:

- All staff and families are encouraged to reconsider travel to Asia or other fast-growing outbreak countries.
- Staff and families who choose to travel to these countries, or have stops in those countries, may need to be in self-quarantine for 14 days upon return to Canada and/or British Columbia.
- Staff and family members who have been in contact with someone with the virus, even if they are asymptomatic, are being asked to self-quarantine for 14 days.
- Staff and family members who develop symptoms should call their health-care provider or 8-1-1 (BC Health Link) to discuss any need for testing and follow-up.
- Please check the Canadian government website prior to any and all travel.

<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>

- We remind all staff to continue to use enhanced hand washing protocols. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/hand-washing>
- As always, kindly stay home if you are sick.
- It is the District's recommendation, that travel cancellation insurance be purchased.

In terms of the School District and the COVID-19, please note the following:

- There are no known cases of the virus in our area.
- To date, there have been isolated cases in Canada, with primarily mild illness but no widespread human-to-human transmission.
- The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health have issued informational letters to families twice. These letters provide accurate information about the virus, as well as where you can get more information. These are posted on our website and will be updated as new information arrives.
- School Districts do not have the ability to test and/or quarantine children, nor is it a School District's mandate to do so.
- Families planning to travel at spring break are asked to make informed decisions about where they will travel to. (See everything above) Travel advisories are issued by the Canadian Government, change frequently, and should be checked regularly. Information regarding travel health notices, travel advisories, and other health related concerns for travelers can be found at:

<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-healthnotices>

AND

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

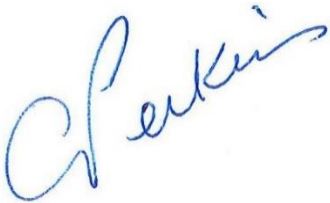
- People who travel abroad to areas of concern can expect to be screened upon re-entry to Canada, a process managed by the Public Health Agency of Canada.
- To date, BC alone has tested more than 1000 individuals, currently more than tested to date in the US.
- At present the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Provincial Health Officer of British Columbia do not recommend school closure strategies for the prevention of COVID-19.
- The promotion of good hand hygiene and coughing etiquette at home, at school, and when in the community, is important. At school, hand washing with soap and water is encouraged, as well as covering one's mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- The use of masks in school/childcare settings is not recommended.
- Custodial staff at our schools continue to maintain cleaning and disinfecting routines.
- The symptoms of the virus are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold. They include coughing, sneezing,

fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing.

- The coronavirus, like influenza, is most dangerous to people who are older than 65, or to those who have chronic illnesses or a weak immune system.

Wishing you all a safe and healthy Spring Break.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christine Perkins | Superintendent & Chief Executive Officer

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