



LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY AND SERVICE FOR MANITOBA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

January 28, 2020

TO: Safety Officers

FROM: Darren Thomas, Risk Manager

RE: **Province Continues to Prepare for Novel Coronavirus**

Please read the following for your information:

Manitoba continues to prepare for the potential arrival of novel coronavirus, ensuring health-care providers are aware of symptoms and implementing heightened precautions to detect, isolate and test for the virus, Health, Seniors and Active Living Minister Cameron Friesen said today.

“There have been no reported cases of novel coronavirus to date in Manitoba and the risk remains low at this time, but we must remain vigilant,” said Friesen. “Across the health system, 911 call operators, first responders and front-line health-care staff have the information they need to identify symptoms and ensure all precautionary infectious disease protocols are in place.”

All patients seeking care at health-care facilities for fever or respiratory symptoms who have travelled in the past 14 days to Wuhan, China – where the outbreak first occurred – or who have had close contact with an ill person who travelled to that region, will be assessed for coronavirus. Paramedics and 911 operators have been directed to ask about a patient’s travel history if they are identifying respiratory, fever, cough or flu-like symptoms. First responders and health-care workers are following existing infectious disease protocols to detect and prevent the spread of the virus.

Suspected and confirmed cases of novel coronavirus are required to be reported to Manitoba’s chief provincial public health officer.

Those who meet the criteria will be placed in a designated separate waiting room. Appropriate infection prevention and control measures will be put in place while the client receives care including the use of surgical masks. If a case is confirmed by laboratory testing, public health will promptly followup with close contacts to take appropriate precautions and monitor for symptoms.

To date, two Canadian cases of the virus have been confirmed, a couple from Toronto that recently returned from Wuhan. Out of an abundance of caution, two Manitoba patients with uncertain travel histories have been tested for novel coronavirus in recent days. Both tested negative for the virus and positive for the common cold, said Friesen.

“The risk remains low and we remain hopeful that we will not see confirmed cases of the virus in our province, but we are prepared in the event it does,” the minister said. “We have excellent infection and prevention control procedures in place to help reduce the risk of illness. Our proximity to the National Microbiology Laboratory, where confirmatory testing for the virus is occurring, is also a clear benefit to Manitobans in ensuring results are delivered promptly.”

Public health officials in Manitoba are working closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the World Health Organization to monitor the situation as it evolves.

Global Affairs Canada announced Monday that Canadians should avoid all travel to the Hubei province of China, where Wuhan is located.

Individuals with recent travel to Wuhan or contact with a recent traveller who currently have symptoms such as a cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose, headache, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties should contact their health-care provider or Health Links at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free).

Common prevention measures include regular hand washing with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleanser. It is important to wash your hands:

- after coughing or sneezing;
- when caring for a sick person;
- before, during and after food preparation;
- before eating;

- after toilet use; and
- when hands are visibly dirty.

Additional precautions include covering your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing. Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of a respiratory illness, such as coughing or sneezing.

PHAC has issued travel health notices about coronavirus. For more information, visit

https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories/pneumonia-china?_ga=2.260947853.1094428749.1578423601-32662530.1555003301.

For health questions or more information on respiratory illness, Manitobans can phone Health Links–Info Santé at 788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free).

Thank you.