

Department of Education and
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Date: March 30, 2020
To: Part II Schools and School Districts
From: Mr. George Daley, Deputy Minister
Copies : Mr. Craig Caldwell, Assistant Deputy Minister
Superintendents
Subject: **Bulletin #6: Update on exceptional measures (COVID-19)**

When government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic event amplified very quickly over a week ago, we immediately put in place exceptional measures to support and provide stability to School and School District employees at a time of extreme uncertainty and fast-changing circumstances.

As we reassess these exceptional measures on a regular basis with the evolution of the pandemic event, I want to provide the following updates.

Childcare responsibilities

Two weeks ago, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development announced that schools will remain closed until further notice and that the closure will be reassessed during the first week of April (this week). Daycares will also stay closed to the general population, remaining accessible for the children of essential workers only.

Spaces in these emergency daycares are limited and are intended for essential workers only. They are not available to staff working in the public education system at this time.

In light of these developments, we are extending the following measures for employees in critical functions (or deployed to critical functions) with children requiring care **for an additional two weeks until April 10, 2020**:

- as a first step, if you are unable to access daycare services, we ask that you attempt to the best of your ability to make safe alternate childcare arrangements;
- as a second step, if you are unable to make safe alternate arrangements, we ask that you work from home if you are equipped to do so. We know that your ability to work from home will also depend greatly on the level of care your child or children require;
- finally, as a last step, where employees are unable to make alternate arrangements and cannot work from home, they will be provided with leave with pay.

Sick leave

In Bulletin #1 on March 19, 2020, we allowed, on an exceptional basis, employees who were sick or unwell to be placed on general leave with pay instead of using sick leave. This measure was lifted on Friday, March 27, 2020. ***Effective Saturday, March 28, employees who cannot report to work due to illness will use sick leave in accordance with the applicable collective agreement or non-bargaining policy.***

Workplace health and safety

Throughout the pandemic event, we have ensured that you and your managers receive information about the necessary precautionary measures and other related resources to provide a safe workplace for those who remain on-site. We understand that these unprecedented circumstances create anxiety no matter the precautions put in place. Employee Relations Services at Finance and Treasury Board have worked with your departments and unions to put in place a process to manage refusals-to-work during the pandemic event. We are also working closely with WorksafeNB to ensure they can come to worksites when needed to declare them safe or not.

While diseases can make anyone sick, some individuals are more at risk such as individuals with underlying medical conditions (e.g. heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, cancer, compromised immune system from a medical condition or treatment such as chemotherapy). If you are not currently sick, i.e. can otherwise perform your duties, but have concerns about your health and safety due to a documented underlying medical condition, please raise them with your supervisor and HR services to ensure the appropriate [workplace and personal hygiene](#) measures are in place. If you have remaining concerns, and you cannot work from home, your managers will refer the matter to the refusal-to-work process and to WorksafeNB if required.

Employees in non-critical functions

As you may be aware, one million Canadians applied for EI. When GNB suspended non-critical functions, we decided to maintain the regular wages of employees rather than provide lay-off notices.

We made this exceptional decision to keep employees in non-critical functions on payroll to reduce anxiety and minimize financial losses. We also made the decision with the knowledge that we may need your talent and skills in different areas of the organization during this unprecedented event. ***This is why we require you to remain available for possible deployment and to report to your assignment when deployed.***

Many among you are already deployed to critical functions either within your own department or in a different department entirely. Many stepped forward without being asked. I thank all of you so much for your dedication and tireless effort.

Your colleagues in critical functions are working long hours in difficult circumstances. As GNB's response to this pandemic event continues, more critical operations will require help to either provide relief to staff or because the current number of workers is insufficient to meet requirements.

The prospect of deployment may be uneasy for some of you, that is normal. I want to reassure you that you will not be unreasonably deployed. Those responsible for coordinating deployments are making the effort to match assignments with skills and competencies. You will not be assigned duties you are unable to do. If training is needed, it will be provided. You will not be asked to work in an unsafe environment. Most of all, please know that if we ask for your help, it is because it is truly needed.

I know the premier, cabinet ministers and all New Brunswickers can count on you at a time when critical public services are required more than ever.

To say that circumstances are changing quickly is a vast understatement. ***We will continue to evaluate the various measures we have in place on a regular basis and update them as needed to sustain GNB, EECD and School District responses to the pandemic.***

We will continue communicating significant developments as we monitor events. Stay informed by checking GNB's coronavirus [website](#) regularly for up-to-date information.

We have also developed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that covers various issues, such as leaves, salary, the impact of out-of-province travel, and the closings of schools and district offices. Please find the FAQ attached.

You can find additional information [here](#). If you are outside GNB's intranet network, you can find them [here](#).



George Daley
Deputy Minister