

March 24, 2020

Message from the Clerk of the Executive Council to Public Service Employees on COVID-19 Response

This is to acknowledge and express my gratitude to you, our valued employees as we continue to work our way through the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether you have been required to provide critical services in person or virtually or if you are at home awaiting information on potential deployment, the uncertain and disruptive impacts of this pandemic have been, and continue to be very trying for all of us.

Your cooperation and ability to adapt so quickly to our modified ways of working and delivering critical programs and services to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador is truly appreciated.

As has been our experience over the last 10 days or so, service delivery decisions are continuously evolving as we refine and sharpen our plans. Your health and safety is paramount through every decision. To this end, we are working extremely hard to support employees with work from home arrangements. The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) is continuously working to expand remote access where needed and we are reallocating equipment to those working in our high priority areas.

Departments with public facing services, especially counter services have enacted process changes aimed at further reducing the level of face-to-face interaction in an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19. These changes are reflected in Provincial Government news releases and public advisories which can be found [here](#). This page is being updated regularly.

We are currently operating with the minimum number of employees to continue to provide essential services and programs. Going forward and until we see our way through to the end of this pandemic, work arrangements are as follows:

- Employees who will continue to deliver critical programs and services as well as all others who can work from home have been made aware of same and provided with direction on how they will continue their work safely;
- All other employees should stay home and remain available for possible deployment, if required.

The Human Resource Secretariat is compiling information for employees on its [homepage](#). Additional information will be posted there in the coming days. For specific information or enquiries, please contact the Human Resource Service Centre at HRSServiceCentre@gov.nl.ca.

Employee Assistance Program

I recognize that this is a difficult time for residents of the province including public service employees. I want to remind you of our [Employee Assistance Program](#), which provides confidential counselling options for employees and their immediate family members. Contact 729-2290 (local) or 1-888-729-2290 (toll-free) for assistance.

Courtesy and Respect in the Workplace

As is to be expected with a significant shift in work arrangements and business processes, there continues to be challenges along the way. Please remember that while this is a time for heightened caution, and while we all have a role to play in protecting others and ourselves, we must remain respectful of our coworkers in accordance with government's [Respectful Workplace Program](#) and [Harassment Free Workplace Policy](#).

I recognize this has been a time of great uncertainty for employees. It is likely that inaccurate information will be circulated; therefore, I encourage you to seek and rely on factual information as communicated by your employer. If you have any concerns or questions that are not addressed through the information currently available online, please reach out to your supervisor, manager or members of your departmental executive team. Contact information for your departmental executive can be found on [Government's Telephone Directory](#).

Privacy Considerations

As we continue to work through this pandemic, it is likely that privacy issues may arise. The **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act** and the **Personal Health Information Act** have provisions that allow for disclosure in emergencies or when the public interest supersedes the protection of privacy. Please ensure you familiarize yourself with privacy principles and relevant legislation as required. Additional information can be found [here](#).

Again, thank you and let's all do our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and promote health and wellness throughout our workplaces and our province.

For the most up-to-date information related to COVID-19, please visit www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19. For questions related to COVID-19, please email covid19info@gov.nl.ca.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Day
Clerk of the Executive Council