

Message to Education Centre Staff

December 10, 2020

Subject Line: Preparing for the Holiday Break

This message is being sent to all Education Centre staff

Dear colleagues,

We would like to thank all of you for a successful return to school and business operations since the start of the school year. Although things are different, it has been nice to see some activity in the building. The work that each of you are doing is critical to the needs of the system and our collective health and safety. We are proud to be part of such a strong team that ensured a successful start to the school year.

As the holiday season quickly approaches, we hope staff will take the opportunity to pause for some well-deserved rest and relaxation time. We must also continue to take all necessary precautions by following public health guidelines, government Emergency Orders and to be prepared for every scenario as the pandemic continues to evolve. We have included some important items below that all staff must be mindful of.

Taking Items Home Over the Holidays

While we do not anticipate a closure in the new year, staff are required to take home all necessary resources (i.e. computers and other essential items) as per the Return to Work Guidelines that were shared earlier in the year. In the event there are sudden changes, access to the Education Centre may be restricted and it is critical you take all items home prior to leaving for the holidays.

Staying Safe During the Break

Although a vaccine being approved is good news, current federal projections indicate that widespread vaccination won't be completed until the end of the third quarter of 2021, at a minimum. Therefore, we must still be vigilant and resist the urge for "pandemic fatigue" to set in. All staff should continue to follow the advice of public health officials over the holidays to protect your family, everyone who enters our workplace and the public so that we can have a strong start to 2021. Please review the attached holiday reminders from the Durham Region Health Department on what we all should be doing and some alternative ways to celebrate this year.

We understand that the restrictions are difficult and frustrating, especially on younger ones and those who enjoy the company of others this time of year, but **we encourage everyone to spread holiday cheer virtually this year**. The decisions that all of us make will have an impact and it is our hope that through collective action, we see a reduction of overall cases after the holidays. We will be sharing the attached information directly with families as well and will encourage them to make positive choices to keep us safe.

Reminders on Travel Restrictions

COVID-19 restrictions will require many of our traditional holiday plans to change and we want to take this opportunity to remind staff of travel restrictions currently in place and how they may impact on your employment obligations.

Travel Outside of Canada

The Public Health Agency of Ontario continues to issue a Level 3 Travel Notice which advises travellers to avoid all non-essential travel outside of Canada. Many countries have also implemented strict travel restrictions and international transportation options continue to be less available. The Government of Canada's Emergency Order under the Quarantine Act requires persons entering Canada by air, land or sea to isolate for 14 days if they have symptoms of COVID-19, or to quarantine for 14 days if they are asymptomatic to limit the spread of COVID-19.

If staff choose to travel outside the country on a voluntary basis, any request for paid quarantine leave through collective agreements or terms and conditions will not be supported under these circumstances. Staff will still be required to self-isolate for 14 days as per the Emergency Order and will not be permitted to attend the workplace. Any leave of absence required to be taken in this respect will be unpaid.

Travel within Canada

Travellers within Canada may be subject to additional provincial, territorial and local public health measures at your final destination. Staff are encouraged to check with those local authorities prior to finalizing travel plans and must follow any isolation guidelines as dictated at the time of travel. Staff who are required to isolate due to travel within Canada, may also be subject to unpaid leaves of absence similar to the above, pending travel restrictions and public health guidelines and orders in place at the time.

On behalf of Administrative Council, we wish you a joyous holiday season. We hope that the time outside of the workplace will allow you to relax and focus on your well-being. Thank you for everything that you are doing and we look forward to seeing you in the new year!

Sincerely,

Jim Markovski
Acting Associate Director, Academic Services

David Wright
Associate Director, Corporate Services

Heather Mundy
Superintendent of Human Resources