



Nancy Chahwan
Chief Human Resources Officer

February 25, 2020

Subject: Update on COVID-19

Colleagues,

As a follow-up to the previous message of January 28 concerning communications to employees on the evolving situation of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), this is to ask you to review your organizational preparedness should the situation continue to evolve.

Since our last message, the Government of Canada has come together to assist Canadians abroad with respect to repatriation efforts.

As part of our overall preparedness, we also need to focus on the steps that will be required should the situation escalate within Canada. Dialogue is critical to ensuring consistent actions and a whole-of-government approach. We therefore encourage departments to ensure that their business continuity plans (BCPs) are up to date. [Mandatory procedures for BCP](#) can be found on the GcPedia.gc.ca (accessible only on the Government of Canada network). Further information is available through the [BCP Helpdesk at Public Safety \(PS\)](#) and in [PS' BCP technical guidance](#).

As a best practice, it is recommended that deputy heads have a “readiness binder” (or electronic file) that includes the following:

- up-to-date BCPs or pandemic plans, as applicable for your organization,
- current contact lists (email and call out trees) for key departmental and partner officials,
- important business information that may be essential for continuity purposes, including while in transit or off-site.

We recommend that your BCPs be tested with different potential scenarios, e.g., 10, 30 or 50 percent absence rates of personnel; geographically contained spread; etc. Business continuity should include first-line, and essential services to Canadians here and abroad, in addition to providing surge capacity to other organizations as you may be called upon to do.

Science-based advice has been at the forefront of occupational health advisories for federal employees that Health Canada's Public Service Occupational Health Program has issued. Information on COVID-19 is available on the [GCintranet](#). Employees can refer to the guidance, which is updated as necessary. They can also consult the Government of Canada's website on COVID-19: Canada.ca/coronavirus. We have shared this advice during technical briefings to the labour relations and occupational health and safety communities, as well as to separate employers, on February 12. We held a similar technical briefing with bargaining agents on February 13.

As you may be aware, the Government Operations Centre sends out daily situational updates, which contain up-to-date information. From the employer perspective, we will continue to monitor and share information as necessary.

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