

All Nunavut schools and daycares to close for three weeks ^[1]

Affected government employees will be accommodated to work from home

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EXCERPTS

All schools in Nunavut are going to close for three weeks, starting Tuesday.

On a recommendation from Nunavut's chief public health officer, Dr. Michael Patterson, the closures are to limit any potential spread of the COVID-19 virus. All daycares in the territory are closing, too.

As of Monday, no cases had been confirmed in the territory.

"It is with an over-abundance of caution that I have made this recommendation," said Patterson in a news release Monday morning.

"While there are still no confirmed cases in Nunavut, this approach aligns with preventive measures in several jurisdictions across the country and ensures the potential spread of COVID-19 is mitigated."

The release also said during the three-week school closure, affected Government of Nunavut employees will be accommodated and encouraged to work flex hours or work from home.

Officials also confirmed Nunavut's Arctic College has opted to remain open.

The closures come less than a day after two Iqaluit schools decided to close last Monday and Tuesday, awaiting more information from Patterson.

Nunavut now joins Alberta, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Quebec in closing schools jurisdiction-wide. Ontario also announced schools would remain closed for two weeks following its March break, and Manitoba will close schools around its break for three weeks, starting March 23.

Patterson is scheduled to hold a press conference at 1:30 p.m., ET, to provide an update on the territorial government's response to COVID-19.

Nunavut Sivuniksavut also staying open

Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) is switching to online classes over concerns of the COVID-19 virus. The post-secondary institution, based in Ottawa, is currently working to try and get the classes up by Wednesday.

"At the moment [we're] not closing because we have all the students here and we need to do something," said Morley Hanson, the executive director of NS.

Hanson says the decision to shut down the school is up to his institution. However what happens to the students, and whether they are sent home, is up to the government of Nunavut's department of family services.

"Even if we shut down we would still have all the students here," said Hanson. "So we are going to try and keep them learning and engaged."

On Saturday, all publicly-funded schools in Ontario closed for three weeks — two additional weeks were tacked on following the province's March break this week. Hanson says this directive does not apply to NS.

Hanson was unable to say if the GN is planning to send students home.

Hanson says they are encouraging students to limit their movements and to follow public health recommendations. The school is also providing items such as cleaning supplies and sanitizer.

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