COVID-19 MEASURES IN MANITOBA

Quick Highlights

- Manitobans are strongly encouraged to practice good hygiene and social distancing. This includes:
  - cleaning your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds, avoiding touching your face, coughing or sneezing into your elbow or sleeve, and disposing of tissues appropriately;
  - staying home and away from others, especially if you are sick; and
  - maintaining a distance of two metres or six feet from others in public.
- Anyone who has health concerns or is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should complete the online self-assessment at www.manitoba.ca/covid19.
- Manitobans seeking assistance due to COVID-19 or looking to volunteer to support others during this time can visit www.HelpNextDoorMB.ca to register. As of 9:15 a.m., April 2:
  - 5,669 total users signed up,
  - 2,477 active users,
  - 161 help requests:
    - 209 help requests matched,
    - 26 cancelled requests, and
    - 11 open requests.
  - 161 cities and towns participating in Manitoba.
- Businesses with questions about how public health orders will impact their business can visit http://engageMB.ca/covid19-csp.
- Community screening sites have opened across the province. These locations are not walk-in clinics. Patients must receive a referral prior to arriving at these sites. Information on locations and hours of operation are available at www.manitoba.ca/covid19.
- For comprehensive information for individuals and organizations on how to prepare for and respond to COVID-19, Manitobans are encouraged to visit www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

Current Public Health Advice and Orders

- The chief provincial public health officer, with the approval of the minister of health, seniors and active living, has ordered that:
  - public gatherings be limited to 10 or fewer people, which affects places of worship, family events, weddings and funerals;

…2/

  - restaurants and bars close effective April 1, with the exception of restaurant take-out or delivery service;
  - non-critical businesses suspend operations, with certain exemptions;
  - critical businesses that continue to operate must ensure separation of two metres between patrons in their facility; and
  - allowing municipal transit services, taxis and other private vehicles for hire to continue to operate, if they take measures to ensure there is a reasonable separation of people in a vehicle.
- Public health officials are strongly advising all Manitobans, including health-care providers, to cancel or postpone any non-essential travel (domestic or international).
- The federal government, under The Quarantine Act, is requiring the self-isolation of all travellers returning from international travel. In addition, provincial public health officials are recommending all travellers should self-isolate and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after returning to Manitoba from other provinces, with some exceptions.
- Health officials are reminding physicians, health-care providers and support staff returning from domestic or international travel that they MUST self-identify to their organization/site's occupational health services.
- There have been reports of multiple phishing scams related to COVID-19. Manitobans are advised not to provide any financial data, hang up on the caller and to report the call to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at (toll-free) 1-888-495-8501.
- Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living is also urging media to exercise caution in reporting information related to the evolving COVID-19 situation and to avoid hearsay or speculation, as this can spread misinformation.

Provincial Response to COVID-19

Health System and Emergency Response

In addition to daily briefings with reminders to practice social (physical) distancing, Manitoba has taken a number of steps and implemented changes to better protect the health of Manitobans. They include:

- tracking COVID-19 as a potential emergency beginning in January, with Manitoba Infrastructure's Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) issuing its first situation note on Jan. 23;
- establishing a Health System Incident Command Structure on Feb. 3;

- suspending classes in Manitoba kindergarten to Grade 12 schools effective March 23 to April 12;
- announcing first presumptive Manitoba case of COVID-19 on March 12;
- suspending services at licensed child-care centres effective at end-of-day March 20 to April 12;
- expanding government response structure with daily meetings of ministers, deputy ministers and frontline staff on March 13;
- escalating the COVID-19 response to EMO's 'Level 1' on March 16;
- limiting visitor access to one person (excluding parents if the patient is a child) at hospitals as of March 16;
- suspending elective (non-urgent) surgical procedures and surgeries for patients who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 effective March 16;
- developing virtual visit and virtual care psychotherapy options to supplement traditional models of care including video-conferencing March 16;
- suspending visitor access in long-term care facilities across Manitoba with exceptions for compassionate reasons effective March 17;
- announcing work-from-home provisions for public servants on March 17;
- suspending adult day programs and similar programming located within long-term care or personal care facilities effective March 17;
- suspending congregate meal services for Support Services to Seniors program effective March 18;
- cancelling all planned interpreter-led events and closing interpretive centres until further notice in Manitoba parks effective March 18;
- suspending day programs through Community Living disABILITY Services for adults with intellectual disabilities, with some exceptions for individual cases effective March 19;
- suspending visitor access at all Manitoba hospitals as of March 19, with exceptions for compassionate reasons made on a case-by-case basis;
- suspending BreastCheck breast cancer screening services at CancerCare Manitoba for at least two weeks effective March 19;
- allowing one visitor for labour and delivery as well as pediatric patients, with stringent screening in place effective March 19;
- asking Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) clients to contact staff through the call centre whenever possible to follow public health recommendations on physical distancing effective March 19;

…4/

- declaring a provincial state of emergency in Manitoba on March 20;
- limiting prescription refills to 30 days to ensure consistent supply of medications effective March 20;
- escalating the COVID-19 response to EMO's 'Level 2' on March 23;
- postponing non-essential and routine diagnostic testing including laboratory, imaging and non-invasive cardiac services effective March 24;
- suspending classes in Manitoba kindergarten to Grade 12 schools indefinitely, and supporting ongoing learn-at-home programming on March 31; and
- initiating screening procedures April 1, to be rolled out for staff working in all hospitals and long-term care facilities, including questions about symptoms and taking their temperature at the start of a shift.

Health System Investments

Manitoba has taken a number of steps and implemented changes to better prepare the health-care system for an increased number of cases of COVID-19 including:

- announcing Manitoba's participation in a national procurement for personal protective equipment (PPE) on March 10, including $35.2 million of equipment, the first province to place an order;
- opening the first testing sites at Access Fort Garry and Access Winnipeg West on March 12;
- opening new testing sites at Mount Carmel Clinic and Access Transcona on March 13;
- implementing upgrades to Health Links–Info Santé that were announced on March 13, which tripled capacity and allowed more than 100 callers at a time;
- opening a new, low-acuity testing site at Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg on March 14;
- opening a new testing site in Thompson on March 16;
- agreeing to terms with Doctors Manitoba for virtual doctor visits as of March 16;
- developing a new online self-assessment tool to help Manitobans determine whether they need to call Health Links–Info Santé to get a referral for testing or to self-isolate on March 17;
- opening new testing sites in Flin Flon and The Pas on March 17;
- opening a new testing site opened in Brandon on March 18;
- opening a new, drive-thru testing site in Selkirk on March 18;
- announcing procurement of an additional 27 ventilators on March 19;

…5/

- opening a new drive-thru testing site in south Winnipeg on March 20;
- opening a new drive-thru testing site in Steinbach on March 20;
- introducing a French version of online self-screening tool available on March 20;
- adapting the self-assessment tool and made it available in an interactive voice response (IVR) format specifically for Manitobans who prefer to complete the screening tool by phone rather than online, and not as a replacement for Health Links–Info Santé on March 21;
- announcing a new drive-thru testing site in Winkler on March 25;
- expanding testing criteria on March 26 to include symptomatic people, regardless of travel history, if they are health-care workers or live/work in isolated or group settings, correctional facilities, shelters, long-term care or residential facilities or remote work camps;
- announcing new testing sites in Eriksdale and Pine Falls on March 26 with drive-thru sites coming to Portage la Prairie and Dauphin in the coming days;
- reaching an agreement with Dynacare labs to call patients back with negative test results on March 31; and
- issuing an order to waive or modify registration requirements to allow former registered nurses to apply for temporary registration and return to work.

Business and the Economy

Steps have also been taken to support the businesses and the province's economy including:

- releasing a supplement to Budget 2020, including fiscal flexibility to respond to COVID-19, on March 19, which included nearly $1 billion in financial flexibility including an increase of the rainy day fund to $800 million;
- extending tax filing deadlines for small and medium-sized businesses with monthly remittances of up to $10,000 on March 22 and this is expected to support more than 20,000 businesses;
- funding support of $800,000 for COVID-19 related research announced by Research Manitoba on March 23;
- calling on Canada to assist provinces with borrowing during the emergency period, to reduce borrowing costs and increase capacity at the provincial level on March 26; and
- introducing a temporary exception to Employment Standards regulations to ensure temporary layoffs after March 1 do not convert to a termination was announced on March 27.

…6/

Support for Manitobans

Steps have also been taken to support Manitoba families including:

- funding support for child-care services for critical service providers including $18 million for the creation of new independent child-care spaces, $7.6 million continuation of child-care operating grants and $2 million for a capital grants trust, announced on March 20;
- launching www.HelpNextDoorMB.ca on March 23 to connect people in need with local volunteers;
- postponing non-urgent eviction hearings and suspending scheduled rent increases on March 24;
- deferring increases in Manitoba Pharmacare deductible rates scheduled for April 1;
- announcing a new digital service for mental health support on March 27, to be launched in the coming weeks;
- introducing new online resources and supports for victims as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month; and
- working in partnership with community experts, including the Shameless Circle and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, to develop public awareness material about the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. The Shameless Circle is a volunteer-led healing circle for women aiming to end the stigma around women standing up for themselves and their children.

Changes to Government Service Delivery

Hundreds of changes to government services have been made to ensuring adequate social distancing while continuing to provide vital services to Manitobans:

- asking staff across government to adopt social distancing by meeting virtually where possible, conducting interviews and meetings by phone, and encouraging online methods;
- moving intake meetings from smaller rooms to boardrooms and larger spaces to ensure distance between staff and clients;
- ensuring staff are working from home in many cases, and suspending public presentations and speeches, as well as non-essential meetings and inspections;
- closing the Manitoba Horse Racing Commission office to unscheduled public drop-in visits and announcing all expiring licenses will be extended until May 31;
- closing Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority (LGCA) offices to unscheduled public drop-in visits; full service continues to be available by telephone, email, fax, mail and on the website at www.MyLGCA.ca;

…7/

- deferring Manitoba Justice's Security and Intelligence Branch security screening interviews and non-essential hiring to focus on priority intelligence operations;
- holding off on issuing tax debt warnings, legal collection action and contacting new debtors;
- suspending all in-car driver testing by Manitoba Public Insurance;
- ensuring critical Treasury functions will work remotely;
- suspending in-person visits at all Manitoba correctional facilities;
- giving greater access to evening and weekend bail hearings as well as increasing the number of court proceedings held by phone;
- suspending most visits, events, trips and other activities at the Manitoba Developmental Centre in alignment with the social distancing guidance;
- undertaking office-based assessment work and drive-by field inspections;
- closing reference rooms at the Archives of Manitoba at 200 Vaughan St. and the Legislative Library to the public, offering phone and email-based services to public and government clients;
- suspending Manitoba Conservation and Climate's parks interpretive programs and reducing staffing;
- conducting all Victim Services meetings, including the home visit program, by phone;
- implementing EIA online application and call centre operations, reducing the need for orientation sessions and speeding up service;
- offering Employee and Family Assistance distance counselling to individuals who meet the criteria for self-isolation (symptoms, recent travel, etc.);
- ensuring legislative counsel staff are now working from home;
- adopting new practices for social distancing and limited service to daytime hours for Northern Airports and Marine Operations;
- expediting the Manitoba Housing rent review process;
- disabling VLTs (half of the 6,700 machines) in restaurants and bars to ensure social distancing, effective March 18;
- amending the Ag Action Manitoba research and innovation grant application process to allow private-sector partnership to be confirmed later in the process;
- developing contingency plans, including staffing re-alignment to ensure ongoing meat inspection at abattoirs, across the province;
- closing the Claimant Advisor Office in Manitoba Finance to in-person intake activities and delivering services by mail, fax or electronic submission;

…8/

- suspending pickups, home visits and inspections for Efficiency Manitoba's Refrigerator Replacement Program, Affordable Energy Program, Home Insulation Program, Water and Energy Saver Program and others;
- temporarily suspending special event permit processing and cancelling previously approved special events with more than 10 participants for the next month;
- moving public and internal training programs online or, where necessary, suspending them including:
  - Provincial Investigators and Security Guard training;
  - Manitoba farm plans;
  - Organization and Staff Development (CSC);
  - Corrections (Custody Operations);
  - CFS group home licensing;
  - Manitoba Emergency Services College; and
  - pesticide applicator and dealer training.
- suspending unscheduled drop-in visits from the public in programs such as:
  - St. Vital, Interlake, Mountain and Red River Bilingual Service Centres;
  - Legal Aid Manitoba;
  - Provincial Investigators and Security Guards;
  - Residential Tenancies Branch;
  - Motor Carrier Safety Programs;
  - Vital Statistics Agency;
  - Manitoba Student Aid;
  - Manitoba Jobs and Skills Development Centres;
  - Advanced Education and Skills;
  - Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority;
  - Apprenticeship Manitoba;
  - Post-Adoption Services;
  - Immigration Manitoba;
  - Student Records;
  - Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission;

  - Workplace Safety and Health;
  - Registration Services (Health Cards);
  - Manitoba Pharmacare Program;
  - Vulnerable Persons Commissioner Office; and
  - Child and Family Services (CFS) Group Home Licensing.
- suspending provincial courts courtroom hearings on most matters while ensuring counter service for warrants, protection orders and other matters remains open;
- suspending non-urgent hearings for other boards, agencies and commissions, and moving many other hearings to phone and video formats including:
  - Municipal Board,
  - Residential Tenancies Commission,
  - Auto Injury Appeal Commission,
  - License Suspension Appeal Board,
  - Rent Increase Appeal Hearings,
  - Manitoba Labour Board, and
  - Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission.
- postponing non-urgent eviction hearings at the Residential Tenancies Branch, and suspending any rent increases scheduled to take effect April 1 or later;
- closing Provincial Offences Court until May 1, automatically remanding tickets for 60 days; and
- closing the Centennial Centre, Sport Manitoba and a variety of community-based community services, and postponing Manitoba Labour Board hearings.