

Human Resources Memo

Frequently Asked Questions for Staff During COVID-19 State of Emergency

March 19th, 2020

To: ALL WQSB STAFF

The Government of Québec has declared a public health emergency for the province, as is the case in many other parts of Canada and the rest of the world. Extraordinary situations call for extraordinary measures. We thank our staff for being patient, for being flexible, for your sense of civic responsibility in the current situation.

This memo is a Q&A prepared by our Human Resources Department which clarifies the Government and school board orientation with respect to remuneration for our employees during this particular situation. With regards to the school closures, please take note of the following:

- All regular automatic staff will be paid for their regularly scheduled hours. All regular timesheet staff will be paid for their regularly scheduled hours. Staff will continue to accumulate benefits, as if they would have been at work. These days are assimilated to workdays.
- All absences that were booked prior to the closure for the closure period will be processed normally. Meaning that vacation, sick day or unpaid leave etc. should still be recorded as such.

Q: Must an employer request an employee to cancel professional trips?

- School boards have been instructed by the Ministry to cancel, effective March 12, all employer-related trips abroad.

Q: Must an employee inform his employer of personal trips outside Canada?

- The board should not approve any new requests made by employees for trips abroad for personal reasons, until further notice.

Employees who have already pre-approved trips abroad for personal reasons may still choose to take them, but they should be made aware of the outcomes:

- Upon return, employees would be placed under “voluntary 14-days isolation”.
- During this quarantine period, the employee would NOT be paid, but might use days in their banks (i.e. compensation time, vacation).
- No sick bank days could be used for this purpose.

Q: Can an employer force an employee not to report to work?

- Boards should only use this measure when concerns are raised regarding the health of their employees.
- For assistance and guidance, employees should contact 1-877-644-4545.
- Refer always to guidelines of <https://www.quebec.ca/sante/problemes-de-sante/a-z/coronavirus-2019/>

Q: Can an employer force an employee to be in isolation?

- Boards should only use this measure when concerns are raised regarding the health of their employees.
- For assistance and guidance, employees should contact 1-877-644-4545.
- Refer always to guidelines of <https://www.quebec.ca/sante/problemes-de-sante/a-z/coronavirus-2019>

Q: If employees from schools and centers are requested to come in for essential services, will this be voluntary?

- Boards must ensure efficiency of services (i.e.: pay).
- No additional compensation will be provided to employees required to report to work.
- Employers should encourage to work from home (Telework).

Q: Are staff going to be paid during the shutdown?

- Everyone is going to be paid who would have normally been paid during this period.

Q: Emergency Daycares were opened, how were they chosen?

- A few of our schools have been selected by the MEES for Emergency Daycare services that are in the vicinity of hospitals. The Ministry selected the sites and established the availability of school-based emergency child care services (daycares) reserved for children of parents designated to provide “essential services”. This service is also available to the children of staff providing emergency child care. This is an exceptional service for these individuals who would have no other alternative. These services are made available for students who are currently attending a preschool or primary school (public or private, English or French). There is no charge to parents for the emergency child care services. Based on the Ministerial Decree 2020-004, all school board in Quebec must insure that school-based emergency child care services are available and functioning. The decree will impact all staff in all school boards in the Province of Quebec. All the hours worked should be tracked in case this decision is changed. At this time, we have enough staff at our chosen centres, but, there may be more registrations and the need for more staff.

Q: If a board personnel or a school or centre personnel that is mandated to work has any symptoms of Covid-19, how should they react?

- They need to inform their supervisor. For assistance and guidance, employees should contact 1-877-644-4545.
- Refer always to guidelines of <https://www.quebec.ca/sante/problemes-de-sante/a-z/coronavirus-2019>
- Personnel should follow the instructions that have gone out in previous communications and follow Santé Québec’s instructions. To date, we do not have a single confirmed active case in any of our schools. Of course, that could change at any moment, but right now, there are no active cases in our system.
- There have been tests carried out and (as of now) everything has been negative. The moment there is a confirmed case, Santé Publique will inform us immediately.

Q: What happens if I was planned to return to work from a salary insurance or CNESST leave, or if I am currently on leave?

- Salary insurance should be maintained until employees have met (physically or otherwise) with their treating physician.
- The treating physician has to produce a medical note indicating that the employee is able to return to work.
- The school board will provide guidance for each individual case.

Q: What will happen to the deadlines prescribed in the collective agreements concerning staffing and school organization?

- At the moment, the deadlines still apply until further notice.

Q: Under what conditions can someone refuse to work in a daycare?

- Based on the Government’s March 18 decree, NO employee may refuse to work whether the work is done in person at the place of work or from home (with the exception of those mandated to be in quarantine e.g. people aged 70+, those possibly or definitively infected with COVID-19 etc.).

Q: Can an employee refuse to work if they feel a threat to his/her safety?

- The responsibility of such claim belongs to the CNESST. Please refer to their website for more information. <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

Q: Employment Insurance (EI):

- For employees applying to EI, upon request, Records of Employment will be transmitted electronically to Service Canada. A separate memo will be sent to Principals to be sent to staff.

For further questions or concerns, please let me know.

Look forward to working together to ensure our staff are safe and well-informed.

Terry Kharyati
Director of Human Resources
Western Québec School Board