

COVID-19

Pandemic Preparedness
Toolkit for

**MANITOBA
BUSINESSES**

PREPARED BY:



**MANITOBA
CHAMBERS OF
COMMERCE**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



As the Voice of Business in Manitoba, we believe we have an obligation to regularly share COVID-19 updates from credible agencies and organizations as it becomes available with our members and the broader business community.

At the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, we are committed to updating our network and stakeholder community by acting as a hub for government announcements, partnering with expert members, and compiling trusted information about the pandemic, pandemic planning, workplace preparedness, work effectiveness, safety issues, stress and mental

health, employer legal duties, employment standards, and more. We will update our website and social channels frequently, and send out e-newsletters as often as necessary.

The health, safety and well-being of our staff, members and community are of the utmost importance to us.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19), previously known as the 2019 novel coronavirus, is a pandemic that is disrupting the operations of employers across all sectors, the health care system, and public institutions. It is critical for employers that businesses are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to respond to protect public health and ensure the continued essential operations of their organizations.

Businesses need to be prepared for any human-resources or operational-related disruptions. It is important for organizations to consider whether and how some aspects of their operations can be continued remotely. While some companies have opted to have their staff work from home, working virtually is essential if quarantines and self-isolation are required. It is equally important to anticipate staff absences for periods of about two weeks at the height of a severe pandemic wave, and lower levels of staff absence for a few weeks either side of the peak.

The guidelines and resources contained in this toolkit have been prepared to help businesses plan for and adapt to the disruption of COVID-19 and any future pandemics.

As the Voice of Business in Manitoba, MCC is committed to supporting our network and stakeholders. Please stay in touch as we move forward through this global community crisis.

Working on Your Behalf,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chuck Davidson'.

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PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST COVID-19

The first consideration of any preparedness plan must be your own health. The coronavirus is spread through direct contact with the secretions from an infected person; either through sneezing, coughing or by touching an object that has been contaminated. It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces. However, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention the virus may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials.

Currently, there is no vaccine available to protect against the COVID-19.

Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living is asking the public to first contact [Health Links – Info Santé \(204-788-8200 or toll-free at 1-888-315-9257\)](#) or your local public health unit if you are experiencing symptoms. They are also asking employers not to send their employees to the emergency room as a first response and not to visit an assessment centre unless you have symptoms. Do not call 911 unless it is an emergency.

The situation is evolving rapidly. Regularly review direction and updates from [Health Canada](#).

To lower your risk of infection, take the following precautions:

How to Hand Wash



Wet hands under warm running water



Apply soap and distribute over hands



Rub hands together to create a good lather: Palm to palm



Rub fingertips of each hand in opposite palm

— Lather and rub hands for 15 seconds —



Rub between and around fingers



Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand



Rub back of each hand with opposite palm



Rinse hands thoroughly under warm running water. pat hands dry with a paper towel



Turn off faucet using a paper towel



Your hands are now clean

Remember to practice the 4 moments of hand hygiene:

1. BEFORE initial patient, resident, client (PRC) or environment contact
2. BEFORE aseptic/clean procedure
3. AFTER body fluid exposure risk
4. AFTER PRC/PRC environment contact

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PLAN FOR THE POSSIBLE IMPACTS ON YOUR BUSINESSES

A pandemic may have several impacts on your business, for example:

- Brick and mortar locations may have to be shuttered, and/or accommodate reduced traffic and/or staff as per recommended public health officials.
- The provision of essential services such as telecommunications, financial services, energy supply, and logistics may be disrupted.
- Customer orders may be cancelled or cannot be filled.
- Supplies of materials needed for ongoing business activity may be disrupted. Further problems can be expected if goods are imported by air or land over international borders.
- The availability of services from sub-contractors may be affected (this may affect maintenance of key equipment).
- Demand for business services may be affected – demand for some services may increase (e.g. internet access, anything health-related); while demand for others may fall (e.g. tourism, cultural events, marketing and promotion).
- Public meetings and gatherings may be cancelled by authorities or organizers due to concerns about the spread of the virus and/or anticipated low attendance. For example, Manitoba health officials are now asking for events of all sizes to be cancelled.

Sectors that depend on heavy foot traffic – retail, leisure, gaming, lodging, and restaurant industries could especially take a hit as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Small businesses and other sectors such as mining or manufacturing face unique challenges as they cannot easily work from home. People are being advised to avoid unnecessary travel and densely populated public areas and any place where people congregate in confined spaces. Consumers are likely to cut down on travel and leisure related expenditures, including transportation, hotels, cruises, entertainment, and visits to public venues.

For companies that are particularly concerned about supply chain disruption, Export Development Canada (EDC) has released a [webinar on managing the impact of the pandemic on global supply chains](#).

All businesses are likely to be concerned about the immediate financial impacts of a pandemic. Some options to consider as you adapt to a period of disruption include:

- Review and understand your business interruption insurance.
- Audit payable and receivable transactions.
- Reconsider capital investment plans.
- Assess your variable costs to determine where they could be lowered or eliminated, or converted to fixed costs.
- Consider alternative financing options.
- Consider alternative revenue streams.

PLAN FOR THE IMPACT OF A PANDEMIC ON YOUR EMPLOYEES AND CLIENTS/CUSTOMERS

- Implement guidelines to modify the frequency and type of face to face contact (e.g. hand shaking, seating in meetings, office layout) among employees and between employees and clients/customers.
- Forecast and allow for employee absences during a pandemic due to factors such as personal illness, preexisting conditions that may make the employee especially vulnerable to illness, family member illness, public transportation closures, school and/or business closures.

Please [click here](#) for information for Workplaces and Employees in Manitoba

ESTABLISH POLICIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED DURING A PANDEMIC

- Establish policies for employees who have been exposed to pandemic illness, are suspected to be ill, or become ill at the workplace.
- Establish [policies for preventing pandemic illness](#) spread at the workplace (e.g. hand washing protocols, promoting respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette).
- Establish policies for flexible work hours (e.g. staggered shifts and staggered break times).
- Assess sick leave or employee absenteeism policies with a view to flexibility. For example, in the event of a widespread pandemic illness outbreak, obtaining medical certificates for any illness may be difficult or delayed, and place undue pressure on an already overburdened health care system.

ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO PROTECT YOUR EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS DURING A PANDEMIC

- Provide sufficient and accessible infection control supplies (e.g. hand hygiene products) in all business locations.

COMMUNICATE TO AND EDUCATE YOUR EMPLOYEES

- Review your current Human Resources Emergency policies and procedures. If any changes are made be sure to communicate these changes to all employees.
- Provide training to employees on your pandemic preparedness and response plan.
- Develop platforms (e.g. hot lines, dedicated web sites) for communicating pandemic status and actions to employees, vendors, suppliers, and clients.
- Ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Develop and disseminate programs and materials covering pandemic fundamentals (e.g. signs and symptoms of pandemic illness, modes of transmission).

WORK FROM HOME

Several companies have chosen to continue operating by allowing work-from-home opportunities OR at least by moving all positions that are able to work from home to home offices, closing their offices to outside visitors or suspending all in-person contact until the public health risk reduces.

STAFF ABSENCES

The most significant impact on your business is likely to be staff absences.

During an outbreak or pandemic, staff absences can be expected for many reasons, including:

- Personal illness/incapacity or heightened vulnerability to the coronavirus due to an underlying condition.
- Government-directed requirement to prevent the spread of the virus, self-isolate or quarantine.
- Staying at home to care for ill family members.
- Looking after school-aged children as a result of school and daycare closures.
- People may simply feel safer at home, particularly if their job requires a commute on public transit or regular contact with the public.

Businesses should consider the applicable legislation and their policies regarding paid and unpaid leave of absences and determine which absences would be covered and whether any changes need to be made on an interim basis during an outbreak. However, several companies have gone above and beyond legislative requirements to help support their employees, continue business operations, and safeguard public health.

In addition to the more common leaves of absence (such as sick leave or family responsibility leave which may be applicable during a pandemic,) in Manitoba the *Employment Standards Code* also provides for job protected leaves of absence for employees in urgent circumstances.

The following is intended to provide general guidance to employers to assist them in addressing the potential impacts of COVID-19 in the workplace, and to provide answers to many frequently asked questions our lawyers are seeing in the context of pandemic planning and the COVID-19 outbreak. It is not exhaustive of all possible legal rights or remedies. In addition, laws may change over time and should be interpreted only in the context of particular circumstances, such that this article is not intended to be relied upon or taken as legal advice or opinion. Finally, all should appreciate that this is a fluid situation and the circumstances of this virus are changing daily, if not hourly. For specific issues and questions related to your own workplace circumstances, please contact a labour and employment lawyer directly. – This information has been provided courtesy of Taylor McCaffrey LLP.

What are an employer's obligations to ensure the workplace is safe for employees?

Employers have a positive obligation under workplace safety and health legislation to provide employees with a safe work environment to the extent reasonably possible. At this time, this would generally involve employers following the public health advice from PHAC and their local health authority, which currently includes reminding employees of common personal prevention and preparedness measures for viruses such as COVID-19 and other contagious illnesses, including regular hand washing with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand cleanser, covering the mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, and encouraging employees to stay home when sick, regardless of recent travel. In certain workplaces, the employer's duty may also involve rearranging the workplace to allow for social distancing, or the provision of personal protective equipment. Each workplace should be assessed based on its own circumstances.

If an employee is refusing to work due to a fear of contracting COVID-19 in the workplace, employers must respond in accordance with the work refusal provisions of the Manitoba *Workplace Safety and Health Act* or equivalent provincial or federal legislation. Work refusal laws differ from

jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but generally speaking, work refusals require a danger to exist that poses a threat to a worker's safety or health in the workplace. Further, an aspect of "reasonableness" often forms part of the assessment as to whether a work refusal is valid. That is, the worker's refusal must typically be based on "reasonable cause" or "reasonable grounds." In addition, work refusal laws often speak to whether the risk is "normal" in the course of the work.

For example, under Manitoba's *Workplace Safety and Health Act*, a worker has a right to refuse work where he or she reasonably believes it poses a danger to his or her safety or health or safety, or the safety and health of others. "Dangerous" work generally means work involving safety and health risks that are not normal for the job.

In the event of a refusal, employers are generally required to investigate the employee's concern, and, if appropriate, adopt measures to eliminate or reduce the workplace danger. This investigation and any follow up measures will, in large part, be based upon the current scientific understanding of COVID-19, as well as the nature of the individual workplace, and the specific facts that led to the refusal. Employers must be mindful that they are prohibited from taking disciplinary action against an employee for exercising their right to refuse unsafe work.

Also bear in mind that although the leaves under employment standards legislation would not apply to an employee's decision to stay home from work to avoid infection, if an employee develops a disabling condition that is related to the virus (e.g., an employee's severe anxiety), that rises to the level of a disability, they may, under qualifying circumstances, be entitled to use sick leave benefits, or to a reasonable accommodation. It is important to note that many employees may develop anxiety due to COVID-19 that does not rise to the level of a disability, and we encourage employers to refer employees to their EAP programs for support during these times.

Can an employer restrict travel?

The Government of Canada has now announced travel restrictions with respect to all non-essential personal travel outside of Canada, including the closure of the Canada-US Border. Based on these advisories, it is recommended employers restrict all international business travel unless it is deemed absolutely essential. While there have yet to be any governmental restrictions imposed on inter-provincial domestic travel, employers may nonetheless see fit to restrict non-essential domestic business travel as well.

Generally speaking, an employer cannot restrict what an employee does on their own personal time, and therefore, cannot restrict an employee from traveling outside of Canada despite the Government directive, nor can an employer restrict domestic personal travel. However, should employees travel internationally for personal reasons, employers can suggest that they follow Government of Canada Travel Advisories, and that there are risks that they may not be permitted to return to Canada if they fall ill while abroad. Employees should also be reminded that the spread and location of COVID-19 is changing daily. Further, employees who do travel should be advised that their ability to return to the workplace will be assessed upon their return to Canada, and that prior to an employee returning to work, they will have to ensure that they have no symptoms of illness.

Employers should be taking steps now to develop a plan and communicate to employees that their employment and pay may be impacted by a requirement to self-isolate, or any other delay that may result in an extended leave from the workplace, such as the quarantines we have seen with cruise ship travelers. For example, if an employee still elects to travel to an affected area for a vacation that was scheduled prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, despite travel advisories recommending otherwise, it would be appropriate for the employer inform the employee in advance of their departure that a self-isolation period post-vacation may be mandatory, and ensure the employee is aware of whether that period of time away from work would be unpaid. This allows the employee to

understand the potential workplace consequences if they chose to continue with their personal travel plans.

Can an employer stop employees who travelled in an area affected by COVID-19 (or who otherwise thinks they have been exposed) from returning to work, even if they are not ill?

The current guidance from PHAC is that anyone who has travelled internationally should self-isolate for 14 days, even in cases where they are not exhibiting any symptoms. Outside of travel, it would depend on the reason why the employee thinks they have been exposed, as well as the nature of the workplace and the risk associated with potential COVID-19 exposure in that workplace as to whether an employee may be asked to self-isolate. Further guidance in this regard should be obtained from local health authorities.

Whether an employee is paid for any self-isolation must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. There may be circumstances where requesting an employee stay off work without pay will be reasonable. It is important to note that where the employer requested the employee travel to an affected area, there is a strong argument that the employer has an obligation to pay the employee for any absence resulting from that travel.

Employers should also review their workplace policies and consider whether they are prepared to extend paid leave to employees who are not ill but choose to self-isolate, whether sick leave or disability benefits can be provided despite the lack of symptoms, whether employees can access vacation, or whether it would be possible for employees to work remotely.

What if an employee contracts COVID-19 and cannot work?

Prohibiting employees who contract COVID-19 from attending the workplace should be no different than how an employer treats any other sick employee, in that any employee exhibiting signs of any contagious illness can be prohibited from attending the workplace until they are well again and confirmed not to be carrying the virus. Further, employees who contract COVID-19, just as any other sick employee, would be eligible to take a certain number of sick days pursuant to employment standards legislation, and may be eligible to claim benefits under a sick leave policy or a disability benefits plan, or where unionized, their collective agreement.

Employers should make themselves aware of the different provincial employment standards legislation (as well as the *Canada Labour Code* for federally regulated employees) and what it provides with respect to paid or unpaid sick and/or personal days. Note that in many jurisdictions, provincial Governments have responded to the COVID-19 situation by enacting changes to statutory leaves in an effort to assist employees. It is very important that employers continue to watch for updates in their local jurisdiction, as these changes are happening quickly. A chart outlining the various provisions as of today's date can be found [here](#). These may be accessed by an employee in the event they, or a family member, becomes ill due to COVID-19. In Manitoba, the *Employment Standards Code* currently provides that employees who have been employed for at least 30 days with the employer are entitled to three days of unpaid leave for personal illness or family responsibility, and up to 17 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave for long-term illness. Federally regulated employees are entitled to up to five days of personal leave, which can be used in the case of personal or family illness, 3 of which can be paid if the employee has been employed with the same employer for three consecutive months. There is also provision for unpaid job-protected medical leave of up to 17 weeks.

In the absence of company paid sick leave benefits or disability benefits coverage, employees may also be entitled to sickness benefits under the *Employment Insurance Act* (Canada), commonly

referred to as “EI benefits”. Provided the employee has accumulated sufficient insurable hours, employees who face a reduction in normal weekly earnings of at least 40% because of illness, injury, or quarantine may be eligible. The Federal Government recently announced changes to EI in response to the COVID-19 situation, in waiving the 1 week waiting period for *sick benefits*. An employee may be eligible for the sick benefit if they contract COVID-19, are required to self-isolate/quarantine, or care for a family member in self-isolation. This is different than the regular *income replacement benefit* that an employee may be eligible for if an employer is required to shut down their operations and lay-off employees as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on their business operations. As of this morning, the Federal Government also announced new income assistance benefits for employees and self-employed persons who do not qualify for EI, including:

- A new Emergency Care Benefit of up to \$900 biweekly, for up to 15 weeks, to provide income support to workers, including the self-employed, who have to stay home and don't qualify for paid sick leave or EI.
- A new Emergency Support Benefit to provide support to workers who are not eligible for EI and who are facing unemployment.

It is possible we could see further changes to EI benefits or other income assistance benefits implemented in the future depending on the impact of COVID-19 in Canada over time. Employers should continue to watch for updates and developments in this regard.

Can an employer lay-off employees where business circumstances due to COVID-19 require closure or reduction in the workforce?

Yes. Employers can lay off employees for lack of work. This is not the same as a termination. A layoff implies an intention to call the employee back to work at some point in the future. A termination permanently severs the employment relationship. The difference is important, because if you terminate, all your obligations upon termination (including statutory pay in lieu of notice, and any contractual/common law notice as well) are triggered right away. It is important to consult the specific legislation in your jurisdiction to ensure you are aware of how lay-off is treated differently than termination in your Province. For example, in Manitoba, under the *Employment Standards Code*, if you intend to call the employee back to work, and the layoff is less than 8 weeks, the employee simply comes back to work. If the layoff continues for more than 8 weeks, then you are deemed to have terminated the employment of the employee as of the first day of the layoff, and your obligations on termination are triggered then. Note that if you pay for benefits/pension during the layoff, the layoff can continue for more than 8 weeks without triggering a termination. There are two main advantages to layoff:

- Any potential payment is delayed 8 weeks; and
- If an employee finds a new job and quits during the layoff, you will not owe them anything on termination.

Note that in Manitoba, employees with less than 30 days of service may be dismissed without termination pay.

Either way, a record of employment should be issued, and the employee would be eligible to apply for EI income replacement benefits, subject to the waiting period.

The MCC certainly encourages employers to consider whether there are options to allow employees to productively work from home, or whether productive work could continue at the workplace with appropriate safeguards in place prior to proceeding with any layoffs.

Can an employer fire an employee if they contract COVID19?

No, employers may not terminate an employee or otherwise discriminate against an employee due to physical disability (which includes certain illnesses) under human rights legislation. Recent

changes to employment standards legislation in some jurisdictions may also provide for job protection in the event an employee contracts COVID-19 or is required to self-isolate. Employers should also approach any form of discipline towards an employee due to the fact that they have (or may have) contracted COVID-19 with extreme caution. Although COVID-19 has not yet been recognized as a disability for the purpose of human rights legislation, employers should not treat employees differently who have contracted COVID-19 or are required to self-isolate.

Under the *Manitoba Human Rights Code*, and other equivalent provincial or federal legislation, employers are prohibited from discriminating against employees on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, and ethnicity (these grounds may vary in other jurisdictions). Employers must be very cognizant of these obligations and should avoid making assumptions based on these grounds that could adversely affect an individual's employment. Employers should also ensure that other employees are not treating their co-workers, or even clients or customers, differently based on assumptions. For example, if employees or customers are being treated differently on the basis of a perceived risk of COVID-19, due to the fact that they are a member of the Chinese community, that may amount to discrimination, and employers should be taking active steps to prevent such behaviour in the workplace.

Can an employer take an employee's temperature at work to assess the risk for COVID-19?

This is not recommended or encouraged. Taking employee temperatures could be viewed as a medical exam, and an employer's ability to conduct a medical exam may be prohibited or limited by privacy or other health related legislation in your jurisdiction. Generally speaking, the utility of employers taking employee temperatures (whether for COVID-19 or for other illness) has been questioned, and we caution employers against doing so in the absence of specific PHAC or local health authority direction.

Can an employer insist on a negative test result for COVID-19 prior to returning them to the workplace?

It will depend on the circumstances as to why a test is being requested, and the testing protocols advised by your local health authority as to whether an employee will be permitted to have a test conducted. Therefore, the practical reality is that an employee may not be in a position to obtain a test result despite an employer's desire for one. For example, in Manitoba, testing for COVID-19 is not available to anyone who wants it at this time. It is limited to only those who have been referred to a testing location by Health Links, following a telephone assessment that indicates certain criteria are met indicating testing is warranted. An employer's insistence that an employee get a test is *not* one of the criteria that would indicate testing is warranted. Note that in some jurisdictions, new legislation has been enacted in light of COVID-19 which also restricts an employer's ability to insist on a doctor's note before an employee is able to obtain sick benefits and/or return to work.

If an employer learns that an employee has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, does the employer have a responsibility to report this information to PHAC?

There is currently no legal obligation for an employer to report a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 to PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) or another provincial health authority. The healthcare provider that receives the confirmation of a positive test result is responsible for reporting this information in accordance with PHAC guidelines and applicable government regulations. Employers should also be mindful that employee privacy rights with respect to medical

information still exist despite the COVID-19 outbreak, and therefore, employers should exercise caution and only be disclosing the minimum amount of information necessary to ensure workplace safety and health if an employee has a suspected and confirmed case of COVID-19. Employers should consult the privacy legislation that applies to their workplace and seek further legal advice if they are unsure of their disclosure obligations.

Regulations under the Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations must also be kept in mind in the event of a pandemic with the threat to health and safety arising from biological agents and infectious disease.

You will also want to keep your employees up to date on the mitigation measures you are employing to both reassure them and to gain their buy-in for managing disruptions to the business. These measures include:

- Regular and consistent communication with your employees so they understand the severity of the pandemic and the preventative measures everyone should undertake.
- Regular and consistent communication regarding the steps your business is taking to prepare for/adapt to the pandemic including their expected roles.
- Development of a business continuity plan that is shared with employees. (See next section)

PREPARING A BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

‘Business continuity’ means ensuring that essential business functions can survive a natural disaster, technological failure, human error, or other disruption. A pandemic demands a different set of continuity assumptions since it will be widely dispersed geographically and potentially arrive in waves that could last several months at a time.

What should be considered in a business continuity plan? The questions below will guide you in preparing your plan or taking the right action as a pandemic unfolds.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN DEVELOPMENT

- Who has responsibility for activating the business continuity plan for your organization and who is that person’s back up?
- What is the process through which the decision will be made to activate and terminate the plan? (e.g. what triggers the plan and/or elements of the plan?)
- Do you have a communications strategy for reaching employees, clients, and supply chain partners as a result of having to implement any section of the plan?
- Who do you need input from both internally and externally to prepare and review a business continuity plan for your organization?
 - Legal counsel
 - HR professionals
 - Building Operators/Facilities Managers
 - Corporate Governance Officials
 - Security, key employee leads
 - Elected officials
 - Community partners
 - Labour unions and bargaining agents
- Who is in charge in the event of a pandemic episode and are the roles of the various stakeholders clearly defined? Who makes what decisions? Who notifies the various stakeholders?
- Is your pandemic plan integrated with your existing emergency preparedness plan(s)?
- Who needs to approve the plan?
- How will you test and/or evaluate your plan?
- Do you have a mechanism to periodically review and update your plan?

DECISION-MAKING AND REPORTING

- Who will be in charge and make decisions within your business concerning services during a pandemic/ emergency episode?
- What will be the mechanism for regular reporting to your management staff/Boards/Government councils during a pandemic episode? (as appropriate for your organization)
- Is there a contact list of all internal and external client and partner agencies, supply chain partners and stakeholders?
- Is there a contact list of all senior staff within your business?
- If public transportation became a problem, can employees arrange alternate forms of transportation to work?
- If necessary, could staff live at the work location or alternative work location for some period of time?
- Have you prepared site-specific notification for office closures and contacts for the public/clients?

- Does your business have a responsibility for the provision of services to the community during an emergency?
 - Provision of food or other supplies
 - Mass housing
 - Care for special needs people
 - Home care and childcare
- Have these services been planned for should there be a staff reduction due to absence?
- Who has signing authority for expenditures during an emergency and who is that person's back up?
- Are there clearly stated policies and procedures that cover signing authority and acquisitions?
- What is the staff capacity of your business and are there provisions to bring in additional staff and/or volunteers?
- Have alternative service providers been identified to assist with maintaining your essential services? What duties will they have and what additional training will they require? Have insurance coverage and union issues been addressed?
- What is the surge capacity of services delivered by your business?

MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

- Are you currently stocked with all necessary supplies for regular day-to-day functions?
- Does your business have contact lists for all your suppliers and alternate suppliers?
- Does your business have access to inventory (including serial numbers) of all computer equipment, printers, mobile phones, photocopy machines, etc. in case repairs are needed?
- Does your business have contact lists for all equipment repair persons?
- Who authorizes repairs and supply/equipment orders? Are there other employees who can take over this responsibility in the event of an emergency?
- Has an inventory been prepared for specialized equipment/facilities that may be needed during a pandemic episode?
- Is there a mechanism that will ensure that additional equipment, e.g., mobile phones, broadband internet capacity, etc. can be obtained with minimum delay?
- Who has authority for ordering repair/replacement equipment and who is that person's back up?

TRAINING

- What are the training needs pertaining to emergency and pandemic flu contingency plans for internal and external business partners/agencies? What additional training will be required?
- What orientation/education should be arranged for your employees to raise awareness about a pandemic emergency?
- Has staff been made aware of basic infection control guidelines to prevent the transmission of COVID-19?

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

- Have services in your business been prioritized to take into account minor to major staff absences due to illness?
- What is the role of your business with respect to assisting with service demands in health care facilities (i.e. hospitals, long-term care facilities, homes for special care) and has this plan been communicated to these facilities?

- Who will make decisions about reducing levels of service and/or cancelling services temporarily?
- Is there a pre-approval process in place for purchasing additional supplies?
- If not, how long does it take for approval to be granted?
- How will reduction/temporary cancellation of regular services be communicated to local clients, stakeholders, supply chain partners, the public and business partners?
- Could any of the business's services be provided from another work location?
- Have sites providing vulnerable services (such as long-term care homes, homes for special care) been identified and has the inventory of such services been shared with appropriate service providers?
 - Patient transportation
 - Patient assessment services
 - Food services
 - Equipment supply services (i.e. oxygen equipment)
- Has your business developed a list of skills and professional competencies of staff that are transferable to other business units, agency functions or for support to health care institutions in the community?
- Have support services been planned for workers, such as transportation, day-care, meals and grief counselling?
- Do you have a plan to replenish depleted supplies?

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Who in your organization has responsibility for collecting/ managing information about staff absenteeism? Who is that person's back up?
- Do you have data on the average number of staff absences due to illness and vacation at different times of the year (monthly rates)?
- Is there a mechanism within your business to monitor and report increasing staff absenteeism due to illness to health authorities (e.g., Health and Safety Coordinator, Health Department)? An increase in staff absenteeism due to illness might be attributed to the spread of infections among co-workers suggesting an outbreak of disease.
- Is there flexibility in your absenteeism policies to address heightened absenteeism as a result of an outbreak, which will not negatively impact employees?
- Do you have policies or procedures to address your employees' psychological impacts resulting from an outbreak?
- Do you have policies or procedures to accommodate your employees' family obligations during an outbreak?
- Has your agency prepared an inventory of skills in the event that people from your business are required to perform duties/ functions in other business units/agencies to maintain essential services?
- Have liability issues been addressed for volunteers and reassigned staff members?
- Do you have a current list of staff complete with telephone numbers and emergency contact information? Has someone been assigned responsibility to ensure that it remains current?
- Do you have a current list of recently retired staff (complete with telephone numbers) who may be contacted in the event of extreme staff shortages?
- Do relevant employees have access to a list of all employees and relevant stakeholders?
- Is there a copy of the Health and Safety manual on site in your business?
- Who will be in charge of communicating to the employees in your business? Do you have backup person(s) to take on this responsibility? How will employees be contacted?

- Who will represent your business on community emergency response team(s), if requested to participate, and are there back-ups to those persons?
- Who will be responsible for payment issues related to overtime and/or additional salary issues? Are there staff designated as backup for these positions?
- In the event of a staff shortage, what roles/responsibilities could external contract workers and volunteers fill? What roles/responsibilities could co-workers fill?
- Who has the authority to hire contract/temporary workers and to take on volunteers? Is there a backup person for this job?
- Does your business have a system staff use to report absences due to illness and other reasons? Is this information accessible daily?
- How will you manage staff who have a higher health risk if exposed to COVID-19?

RECORD-KEEPING

- Has your business developed appropriate record keeping procedures for items such as:
 - Staff absences
 - Vacation
 - Complaints and issues
- Do you have a plan to record significant decisions that were made during a pandemic?
- Is regular reporting to boards/government required?
- Have you safeguarded copies of your company's essential corporate records, such as:
 - Constitution, bylaws, charters, franchises and orders-in-council
 - Accounts payable and receivable
 - Bank and audit records
 - Capital and fixed assets records
 - Contracts and agreements
 - Licenses and permits
 - Leases, deeds, property and land files
 - Blueprints and technical drawings
 - Inventories
 - Mailing lists
 - Organization charts
 - Financial signing authorities
 - Union agreements
 - Software
 - Supplier listing
 - Insurance policies
 - Procedural manuals
 - Personnel records, payroll documents, pension fund files, salary deduction lists
 - Annual reports
 - Research, technical data and specifications on specialized projects
 - Special agreements with clients
 - Sales records and guarantees

COMMUNICATION

- Have you developed internal and external pandemic communications plans? (see [here](#) for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's adapted crisis communication plan)
- In your organization, who has primary responsibility for communicating with the public/business partners/supply chain partners/staff? Who is that person's back up if this person is ill?
- Are there people in your organization who have sole access to incoming information, e.g., business information, incidence reports, complaints etc.? If so, have you arranged for designates to receive this information?
- Does your organization maintain a central inventory of passwords to office equipment and electronic files? Is there a designate for the person who has responsibility for the inventory?
- If your information technology lead is ill, to whom can you turn if you experience computer problems?
- How does your staff communicate with each other during office hours and after-office hours? Is there an alternate form of communication they can rely on?
- Who are your security contacts should there be a problem with physical access to your work location and is there a back up to your security contacts?
- If mail service is interrupted, are there critical items you need to receive or deliver that you will need alternative arrangements for?
- Does your organization send out time-sensitive letters or documents and is there a back-up system for these?
- How are courier packages generally received and sent out?
- How will you send out public service announcements and news releases?
- Will employees and the public be able to access a website or telephone number to get updates on service delivery news?

RECOVERY

- What are the immediate lessons learned?
- Who will have the authority to notify the various employees, clients, and stakeholders regarding reinstating services and finally return to full service?
- Who will be responsible for evaluating your local response?
- What factors should be examined as part of the evaluation?
- Have any health (including mental health) needs for staff been provided for?

This list may seem overwhelming. To help get you started, Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) has created business continuity plan templates, which can be found [here](#).

FURTHER RESOURCES

In the event of an emergency, contact your local Public Health Unit. Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and Shared Health are monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak and can provide advice and direction regarding steps to be taken by individuals experiencing symptoms or who fear they have contracted the illness. The Chief Provincial Public Health Officer is responsible for critical services governed by the Public Health Act and he or she is endowed with broad and these may impact on your business and employees.

Your local public health units will have released pandemic plans for their communities. Some of the plans contain information dedicated to the business community, including helpful tools and suggestions.

The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce is closely monitoring the COVID-19 escalation.

We understand how difficult it is right now for businesses and their employees during this time. Our goal and hope is to support you through this difficult time and connect you with valuable tools and resources to help you make decisions for your business based on accurate information and expert recommendations.

Also consider consulting the following resources to assist with your planning and deployment efforts:

FOR BUSINESSES/EMPLOYERS OR LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LEADERS SEEKING INFORMATION AND SHAREABLE RESOURCES ABOUT EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS, WORKER SAFETY, ETC:

- **Government of Canada:** The Trade Commissioner has released a [*massive online toolkit specifically compiled to address COVID-19 and businesses*](#), support for workers, EI program changes, exporting, and more.
- **Government of Canada:** [*Public Service Occupational Health Program \(PSOHP\)*](#)
- **Government of Canada:** [*Employment Insurance: Sickness Benefits*](#)
- **Government of Canada:** [*Export Development Canada \(EDC\): FAQs: What Canadian exporters need to know about the coronavirus*](#)
- **Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC):** [*Support for entrepreneurs impacted by the coronavirus COVID-19*](#)
- **Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC):** [*Business Credit Availability Program \(BCAP\)*](#)
- **Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC):** [*Business Continuity Plan and Templates for Entrepreneurs*](#)
- **MNP LLP:** [*Federal Tax Response to COVID-19*](#)
- **Grant Thornton:** [*COVID-19 and your business: Government and economic resources*](#)
- **Grant Thornton:** [*Strategies to help businesses respond to COVID-19 – Grant Thornton*](#)
- **Canadian Chamber of Commerce:**
 - [*Pandemic Preparedness Guide*](#)
 - [*Crisis Communications Plan template*](#)
 - [*Business Continuity & Recovery Plan template*](#)

- Other Helpful Links

- [NEW! *Employment Insurance provisions*](#) – Government of Canada Employment and Social Development Canada
- [NEW! *Mortgage deferrals for those affected by COVID-19*](#)
- Retail Council of Canada: [*Planning list for Retailers \(COVID-19\)*](#)
- Covid Continuity: [*Resources for Business*](#)

- [*Info for Chambers of Commerce Group Insurance Plan clients*](#)

- [*PeopleFirst HR*](#)

- Recorded webinar for employers: [*Click here to view*](#)
- [*A COVID-19 Questions & Answers document*](#)
- [*Sick Leave Comparison Chart*](#)

- [*The Conference Board of Canada's COVID-19 Resources*](#)

- [*Video: Mental health and COVID-19*](#)
- [*How employers and employees should manage self-quarantines*](#)

- Tools you can share with your staff/local members

- [*Health Canada – Self-isolation Infographic*](#)
- [*Washington Post – Coronavirus Simulator*](#)
- [*Tips to help your family stay healthy Infographic*](#)
- [*WHO – Getting Workplace Ready*](#)
- [*WHO – Myth-buster Infographics*](#)

FOR INDIVIDUALS/EMPLOYEES SEEKING INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTH PROTECTION:

- Manitoba Health, Seniors & Active Living

- [NEW! *Shared Health's Screening Tool*](#) [for those experiencing symptoms and wish to self-assess online to determine if a test is warranted]
- [*COVID-19 Bulletins*](#)
- [*Strategies for all Manitobans*](#)
- [*What do I do while waiting for my test results?*](#)

- Public Health Agency of Canada

- [*COVID-19 Resources*](#)
- [*How to self-isolate at home*](#)
- [*Reduce the spread of COVID-19 – Wash your hands*](#)

- World Health Organization

- [*COVID-19 website*](#)
- [*Protect Yourself*](#) [advice for individuals, as well as links to videos and posters you can download about hand-washing, tissue disposal and clean workplace protocols]
- [*Infographics – Myth-busters*](#)

- Infographics and Articles

- [*Health Canada – Self-isolation Infographic*](#)
- [*Washington Post – Coronavirus Simulator*](#)
- [*Tips to help your family stay healthy Infographic*](#)
- [*Coronavirus: Myths vs Facts from Johns Hopkins Medicine*](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO CONTACT US PLEASE VISIT [JOINTHECHAMBER.CA](https://jointhechamber.ca)