

Saskatchewan COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

March 11, 2020

Pandemic Planning Framework

Leveraging the 2009 H1N1 Pandemic plan as a framework to guide COVID-19 planning, the Saskatchewan Health Authority has local operational plans to address:

1. Continuity of health services and surge capacity
2. Supply chain management
3. Surveillance
4. Lab and testing services
5. Infection prevention and control
6. Public health measures
7. Assessment sites
8. Clinical Guidelines
9. Human resource management
10. Occupational health and safety
11. Communications
12. Psychological considerations

These plans are being updated to reflect the latest available information on COVID-19.

Current State - Canada

- Currently the likelihood of an outbreak of COVID-19 in Canada is considered to be **high**.
- The current risk to the **general population** in Canada is low, but it can change rapidly.
- While a cluster of illness and community spread is likely to occur in Canada, our public health system is prepared to respond to these occurrences in order to reduce health impacts and the impact to our health systems.

Current State - Risks

- The risk is higher for severe illness and outcomes in **older age groups** and those of **all ages with underlying medical conditions**.
- The risk will vary between and within localized communities.
- The risk will also vary based on **international travel history and type of activities** while abroad. Cruise ship travellers or those who participate in mass gathering events are at higher risk of exposure.
- Risks can be mitigated by observing **health etiquette** (e.g. hand washing, staying at home when ill) and **social distancing** measures (e.g. no handshakes, hugs, kisses).

Federal Response

- A Special Advisory Committee of Canada's Chief Medical Officers of Health is in place to respond to COVID-19. This Committee has focused attention on coordination of federal, provincial and territorial preparedness and response across Canada's health sector.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Lab (NML) in Winnipeg is performing diagnostic testing for the virus that causes COVID-19 and is working in close collaboration with provincial and territorial public health laboratories.

Saskatchewan's Response

- The goal in Saskatchewan is to **detect cases** as early as possible and **delay spread** as long as possible.
- The Chief Medical Health Officer (CMHO) designated the novel coronavirus as an “emerging communicable disease” pursuant to the *Disease Control Regulations* to support physician and laboratory reporting of cases to public health.

Saskatchewan's Response

- On March 3, 2020, the Ministry of Health activated a Health Emergency Operations Center (HEOC).
- On March 5th, the SHA convened a Provincial COVID-19 planning meeting to formalize operational response plans for potential COVID-19 cases in Saskatchewan.
- Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) activated their Emergency Operations Center (SHA-EOC) on March 9th.
- Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency enacted a Provincial Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) on March 10th and will meet weekly.

Saskatchewan's Response

- The Ministry of Health continues to work with First Nations partners to ensure a coordinated response across the province.
- As of March 11th, Public Health officials are advising all travelers to self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after returning to Canada and will be instructed to self-isolate if symptoms develop and to call HealthLine 811 for direction and to be connected to public health.
- Saskatchewan is establishing multiple options for testing including: in home, at primary health care clinics or emergency rooms by calling ahead.
- COVID-19 assessment sites will be established, in Regina and Saskatoon, as a priority to support readiness for increased testing and alleviate pressure on HealthLine and physician clinics.

Saskatchewan's Response

- The Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory (RRPL) has established a testing platform to conduct preliminary tests for COVID-19.
- The SHA has completed an assessment of the current capacity of ventilators, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and testing supplies.
- On February 14th, the Ministry of Health directed the SHA to increase their PPE inventory to ensure a six-month supply, and to consider the pending needs to primary care physicians as well as any potential needs for individuals and care givers who are being instructed to self-isolate. This order has been placed.
- Saskatchewan is working with the Public Health Agency of Canada to procure additional PPE supplies through a federal bulk purchasing order.
- On February 24, the Chief Medical Health Officer provided guidance to HealthLine, Medical Health Officers (MHOs), emergency departments, laboratories and radiology services to proceed with services for non-insured individuals who require clinical assessment for COVID-19.

Saskatchewan's Response

- Modelling of potential scenarios and impact of health services is underway to inform local planning.
- SHA and MoH are actively working with the SMA and the College of Physicians and Surgeons to address physician concerns and questions.

Planning Assumptions

- COVID-19 causes mild illness in 80% of cases; infected individuals will be asked to self-isolate at home unless sick enough to require hospitalization.
- Public health officials are advising all travelers to self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after returning to Canada and will be instructed to self-isolate if symptoms develop and to call HealthLine 811 for direction and to be connected to public health.
- A risk assessment of mass gatherings will be conducted to inform if events will be postponed or cancelled. On March 7th, specific guidance was provided to the organizers of the 2020 JUNOS, being held in Saskatoon March 9-15.
- Continuity of health services and surge capacity planning is underway and will be necessary if there is rapid community transmission.

Public Interest and Communications

- The public will be interested in all methods of personal protection against COVID-19.
- Public acceptance of any infection control measures will reduce the spread of the disease.
- The Chief Medical Health Officer has been available for a weekly scrum.
- A landing page at <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus> has been created to support access to current information. Information is being updated as the situation changes.
- Updates are provided to a broad range of stakeholder groups including: SHA; regulatory bodies; unions; affiliates of the SHA; and service providers.
- A COVID-19 testing assessment algorithm has been created and updated to support assessment for incoming calls to HealthLine.

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