



Fort McMurray Catholic Schools understands this is a time of high anxiety for many in our region and throughout the world. We will continue to work with our families and provide as much information as possible during a rapidly evolving situation.

Fort McMurray Catholic Schools and all publicly funded schools in Alberta, will remain open at this time as per the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr Deena Hinshaw. [Please see this video from Dr.Hinshaw](#), explaining the reasoning behind this recommendation.

What We Are Doing

We, at Fort McMurray Catholic Schools, are following the lead of our Chief Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health Services and National Public Health officials. While the risk is still deemed low, Fort McMurray Catholic Schools is implementing many measures for the prevention and control of respiratory viruses.

*There is a zero tolerance for children and staff to attend Fort McMurray Catholic Schools while ill, especially with any respiratory issue. Staff who are exhibiting symptoms must Self Isolate for 14 days and report to their Principal that they are at home doing so. There is now a [self assessment tool provided by Alberta Health Services](#).

- We are increasing cleaning in recommended areas including high touch areas
- We are speaking with all students/staff, encouraging more frequent and proper hand washing,
- We are modeling and ensuring proper respiratory etiquette (ex. Sneezing into elbow),
- We are recommending students bring a water bottle to school,
- All student out of town travel (eg. curricular and extracurricular) have been cancelled,
- All before and after school clubs have been postponed indefinitely,
- All community bookings (rental of school facilities) have been postponed indefinitely

Easter Break and Travel

We know many of our families and some staff may have trips planned for our upcoming Easter Break with some choosing to spend the week travelling abroad.

Please note the current recommendation from the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health and National Public Health officials is to **not travel** internationally at this time. If a person chooses to do so, they will be required to self isolate for a period of 14 days on their return.

It is important to understand that COVID-19 is having an impact globally and that non-essential travel in general is an additional risk that we should all consider.



Decisions regarding whether or not to travel remain the responsibility of families. The COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly with increasing global spread, so it is important that people have up-to-date information to inform these decisions. All Albertans are encouraged to visit www.alberta.ca/COVID19 or www.ahs.ca/covid for guidance around prevention, testing and other useful information. There is a [self assessment tool now provided by Alberta Health Services](#).

Travel advisories are issued by the federal government and can be found at [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Travel advice](#). In addition to travel advisories, this site also offers information on the health risks of travel specific to the evolving COVID-19 situation. Families are encouraged to visit this site to help guide their decision on whether to continue with travel or adjust their travel plans. It is also important to know that decisions made by travel companies, airlines and other countries may affect your travel plans.

While the current risk of catching the virus in Alberta remains low, this may change in the coming weeks. It is important that all of us take the necessary steps to minimize risk and to keep others safe. Whether staying in Fort McMurray or travelling, the following steps are important in preventing the spread of common respiratory illnesses (such as influenza) as well as COVID-19:

- use good hygiene practices, such as frequent handwashing
- cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Dispose of tissues immediately and wash your hands
- avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill
- don't share items that may have saliva on them such as drinking glasses and water bottles
- clean high touch surfaces such as taps, door knobs and countertops frequently

We know this is a very difficult time for many. This is a high stress situation and the amount of information can be overwhelming. We have counsellors available in all of our schools. We will get through this time together. Additional mental health information will be posted on our website to help families cope with stress.

It is always the choice of a parent/guardian whether to send their child to school. Please let your school know if your child will not be attending school.

We have compiled the latest information regarding COVID-19 on our website: <https://fmcschools.ca/covid-19-information/>

Contact 8-1-1 (Alberta Health Link) or your health care provider for questions about your personal health situation.



Please note: School divisions do not have the authority to make public health decisions. If steps are taken in relation to a public health concern, it is at the direction of the Alberta Health Services and local health authorities. Fort McMurray Catholic Schools is in regular communication with Alberta Education, Alberta Health Services, and school divisions across the province.

Thank you for your support as we work to help keep our communities healthy and safe. The safety and security of our students and staff is always our first priority in Fort McMurray Catholic Schools.

George McGuigan

Superintendent of Schools