

March 10, 2020

District Cancels Student Travel to European Destinations

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is cancelling District-approved travel to European countries, booked to the end of April 2020, due to safety concerns associated with the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The District can cancel a trip within 24 hours of departure if students are travelling to (or through), a country determined to be a risk. If a country has not been determined a risk, there is no guarantee travel insurance purchased by parents will be honoured - regardless of whether the District cancels the trip.

“This decision is not taken lightly,” said Tony Stack, CEO/Director of Education. “We have been monitoring the situation closely, in consultation with public health authorities, and watching the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 increase rapidly in areas where our students are scheduled to travel. This precautionary measure is designed to reduce the risk of having students exposed to the virus, or being quarantined in a foreign country, or upon their return to Canada. It’s just not a risk we are willing to take.”

At this juncture, the cancellation affects approximately 17 trips and about 475 students and chaperones. Other trip destinations are being monitored, and may be cancelled as this public health situation evolves.

Mr. Stack said the District has consulted with Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, the province’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, who has indicated her support for a low risk approach to student travel. The District has also been in contact with the major tour operators (EF Tours, Explorica) about the options available to families at this point. We have been advised that District cancellation due to an identified risk will allow for families to be compensated in some manner. There may be opportunities for full or partial reimbursement (based on individual insurance plans); rerouting to alternate destinations, rescheduling for alternate dates, or vouchers for future travel. **However, each situation is unique, so the District encourages families to contact their school trip organizer, and work with their travel company and insurance provider, to determine available options. Parents may also be able to cancel of their own accord.**

The cancellations to date are a precautionary measure made in the interest of student safety, security and public safety. The move is designed to reduce the risk of students being exposed to the COVID-19 coronavirus, or being quarantined as the result of a school-sponsored trip. Meanwhile, the District is continuing to monitor the situation, in consultation with provincial health authorities.

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