The Provincial Health Officer has released new Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19 for Children and Students. The FAQs provide more information on COVID-19 – including symptoms, prevention practices and additional resources – as well as guidance related to staying home from school, wearing masks and supporting friends/classmates who are worried about the coronavirus.

Regarding out-of-province school trips, public health officials are advising school districts to reference Government of Canada travel health notices to inform decision making regarding upcoming school travel. Currently, Level 2 travel advisories (recommending that travellers practice special health precautions) related to COVID-19 have been issued for Northern Italy, South Korea and Iran; the only Level 3 travel advisory (recommending avoiding non-essential travel to the destination) in place is for China. However, situations are changing quickly in some regions, so check the Government of Canada travel advisory site frequently for updates.

Further to the Provincial Health Officer’s updated guidelines for schools and childcare programs, that were circulated in the DM Bulletin on February 25, 2020, some local health authorities are reporting an increased volume of calls from parents regarding the Guidelines’ section on “Report to your local Medical Health Officer if your school/childcare setting has a suspected case of COVID-19, unusual absenteeism, or other concerns” (page 7). Public health officials would like to clarify that this section of the Guidelines only applies to school/childcare administrators; it is not intended to encourage parents to contact medical health officers directly. Any opportunities to reinforce this messaging in relevant school communications to parents would be appreciated.

If district staff receive media inquiries, please notify the Ministry of Education’s Government Communications and Public Engagement team for support. Specific public health questions regarding COVID-19 should be directed to your local health authority for response.

Contact Scott Beddall, Director of Wellness and Safety, if you have any questions.