

March 17, 2020

As you are aware, the current suspension of classes is in response to the unprecedented challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation supports the action of the Government of Saskatchewan to suspend classes as a means of slowing the rate of infection and protecting students and families across the province.

The communication from the Government of Saskatchewan announcing the suspension of classes created significant uncertainty and prompted many questions from STF members. STF Executive Director Randy Schmaltz is participating on an education sector Response Planning team, along with representatives from the SSBA, LEADS, SASBO and the Ministry of Education.

This afternoon, an email was provided to all board chairs on behalf of the Response Planning team. It confirms:

- Starting Friday, March 20 all 27 school boards should pause educational operations for a one-week period to allow longer-term planning to take place.
- Divisions will direct all school staff to stay home from Friday, March 20 until end of day March, 27, 2020. For most of you, this would mean returning to school on Monday, March 30.
- This time will be paid in full and there will be no loss of benefits.
- The Ministry of Education will continue to provide all funds to school divisions to ensure they can make decisions and honour all contracts.

The email sent to all board chairs reads as follows:

*On behalf of the education sector Response Planning team and in conjunction with advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Saskatchewan, starting Friday, March 20, all 27 Saskatchewan school boards should pause educational operations for a one-week period. This one week away will allow the Response Planning team and individual school divisions to put in longer term plans to supports students, staff and families moving forward to ensure that no student's education is negatively impacted by the closing of schools indefinitely.*

To achieve this, divisions will need to direct all school staff to stay home until end of day Friday, March 27. This includes teachers, support and professional staff. It is important to ensure that staff understands that this time served at home will be paid in full and there will be no loss of benefits. Layoff notices will not occur during this time.

Each school division will be enacting their business continuity plans to ensure that core functions such as payroll and building security continue to function while ensuring all staff safety. This plan should include having availability for parents, families and staff to call or email your school divisions if they have questions during this time.

The Ministry of Education will continue to provide all funds to school divisions. This will allow divisions to make decisions going forward to meet the local needs as well as honour all contracts.

We thank you for your continued work and support in ensuring the needs of students, staff and families are met.

The uncertainty during these challenging times can place enormous stress on members and families. The Federation wants members to take care of themselves, so remember to access benefits as needed that the Members' Health Plan provides, including a Member and Family Assistance Plan (MFAP) through ComPsych. Refer to the following [link](#) for more information.