

IS YOUR ORGANIZATION READY FOR THE CORONAVIRUS?

By [Andrea M. Marsland](#)

On March 1, 2020, Mayor John Tory announced that Toronto Public Health was monitoring five (5) positive cases of the Coronavirus: COVID-19 in Toronto. As of March 2, 2020, the Public Health Agency of Canada ("PHAC") assessed the public health risk associated with COVID-19 as low for Canada. The public health risk is continually being reassessed as new information becomes available.

Nevertheless, employers should be prepared for employment-related issues and questions relating to the Coronavirus. That being the case, it is important that employers and employees alike (i) be reasonably educated about the issue, (ii) be able to recognize the symptoms, and (iii) take reasonable precautions to avoid unnecessary risk.

What should you know?

Symptoms of the Coronavirus may take up to fourteen (14) days to appear after exposure. These include fever, cough, difficulty breathing and pneumonia in both lungs.

The Coronavirus is most commonly spread from an infected person through: respiratory droplets generated when one coughs or sneezes, close prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands, touching an infected person, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands. There are currently no vaccines available to protect against the Coronavirus.

Best Practices for Employers

The following list provides some suggestions for employers to help manage this issue at work:

- educate employees on the risks associated with the Coronavirus in order to avoid widespread panic in the workplace;
- actively encourage sick employees to stay home, which would include employees with sick family members showing symptoms;
- if anyone begins to show symptoms in the workplace, send them home right away;
- if employees have travelled to any of the seriously affected areas such as China, consider requiring them to self-quarantine for fourteen (14) days upon their re-entry to Canada;
- if any employees have pre-booked employment-related travel to any of the seriously affected areas, make the necessary arrangements to change travel plans until more is known about the Coronavirus;



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- make hand sanitizer products available in the workplace;
- have a designated point person who is reasonably educated on COVID-19 and who can reasonably answer questions about the workplace response to this issue;
- make resources available to your employees with respect to the Coronavirus (e.g., circulate links to the World Health Organization, PHAC, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention); and
- familiarize yourself with the types of leaves of absence available to your employees should any of them become affected by the Coronavirus.

It is important to stay on top of developments as they occur and to respond reasonably, and without panic, to this unfolding issue.