

Good afternoon,

This news release was shared with media today:

HEALTH/WELLNESS--First Presumptive Cases of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia; New Prevention Measures  
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Nova Scotia announced the province's first three presumptive cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), today, March 15. The province is also taking further measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The cases are not connected and are travel related. The individuals followed all the proper procedures when they started to feel unwell.

"My thoughts are with the individuals affected and I wish them a speedy and thorough recovery. Now, more than ever, all Nova Scotians must follow public health direction - that's how we will reduce the spread of this virus in our province," said Premier Stephen McNeil. "We need to work together to protect our most vulnerable."

Two individuals are in the Halifax Regional Municipality and one is in Kings County. All three are managing their symptoms at home in self-isolation. Details include:

- a female in her 60's, who returned to Halifax from Australia on March 8.
- a male in his late 50's, who recently attended a conference in California and returned to Halifax on March 13.
- a male in his 30's, who returned to Halifax on March 10 following travel throughout Europe.

Public health has been in contact with these individuals and those who have come in close contact with them are also being directed to self-isolate at home, away from the public, for 14 days.

Additional prevention measures for Nova Scotians are in effect immediately under the authority of the Health Protection Act and include:

- long-term care facilities closed to visitors effectively immediately
- public schools closed for two weeks following March Break (weeks of March 23 and March 30) and then will be reassessed
- regulated child care centres closed March 17 to April 3 and then will be reassessed
- March break camps cancelled
- casinos in Halifax and Sydney are closed as of 12 am March 16 and bar owners can no longer operating VLTs
- anyone who travelled outside of Canada must self-isolate even if symptom-free
- organizations and businesses must practise social distancing of two metres or six feet and keep gatherings below 150 or much smaller if possible. This applies to restaurants, bars, movie theatres and other gathering spots

Starting Monday, March 16, public health inspectors will be onsite at the Halifax International Airport and the J.A. Douglas McCurdy Sydney Airport. Work is ongoing with federal partners responsible for border security to strengthen the screening process. As well, both airports now have information on digital screens in all areas frequented by travellers.

Nova Scotians can find accurate, up-to-date information, handwashing posters and fact sheets at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus> .

Quick Facts:

- as of March 15, Nova Scotia has completed 418 tests for COVID-19, with 415 negative results and 3 presumptive positive cases. Testing numbers are updated daily at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus>
- the Government of Canada has issued a travel advisory asking Canadians to avoid non-essential travel outside Canada until further notice.
- anyone who has travelled outside of Canada or has been in close contact with someone who has and are experiencing fever (above 38C) or cough should complete the online questionnaire to see whether you need to call 811. The online questionnaire can be found at: [811.novascotia.ca](http://811.novascotia.ca)
- Nova Scotia's Health Protection Act gives the chief medical officer of health the authority to give advice to protect public health and decrease risk to public health presented by communicable diseases such as COVID-19 --the public school system will be investigating virtual schools focused on essential curriculum to ensure Grade 12 students can graduate

Additional Resources:

The Public Health Agency of Canada maintains a list of affected areas:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/covid-19-affected-areas-list.html>

Government of Canada: <https://canada.ca/coronavirus>

Government of Canada toll-free information line 1-833-784-4397 Nova Scotia Public Health offices:

<http://www.nshealth.ca/public-health-offices>

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