



Joint statement on the LDSS trip to the UK from Avon Maitland District School and Huron Perth Public Health

March 20, 2020

Background

For the past several weeks, the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) has been monitoring travel advisories and information from the World Health Organization in order to determine how to proceed with our scheduled international trips. All AMDSB European trips scheduled for March Break were cancelled, modified or postponed. The Listowel District Secondary School (LDSS) trip with the tour company Explorica, was originally scheduled to visit London, England. Given that there were no travel advisories for the UK, the option to avoid London and travel towards Scotland where there were few COVID-19 cases at the time, was requested by AMDSB senior staff and then, once revised, approved to proceed. This decision was made after consulting the Huron Perth Public Health website and the LDSS staff organizing the trip.

Parents and students were informed at a meeting and could decide how to proceed. The group (41 students and 5 supervisors) left Toronto on Thursday, March 12. On March 14, the Canadian Prime Minister announced that all Canadians who were outside of the country should return as soon as possible. Explorica and AMDSB senior staff began looking for alternate flight arrangements to transport the group home earlier than their originally planned departure (Saturday, March 21). Unfortunately, due to the size of the group, they were unable to secure enough seats to return home any earlier and through frequent contact with Explorica, the group was assured that Air Transat would honour their flight schedule on Saturday.

Throughout their trip they have been diligent about hand hygiene and social distancing and have spent the majority of their time doing outdoor attractions with minimal contact with other groups. As of today (Friday March 20), none of the students are ill or show any of the symptoms of COVID-19.

What will happen when the students return

The group will arrive home to Listowel via bus, families will pick students up and return them home. A letter from the AMDSB Director, developed in partnership with Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH), was shared with parents in advance of the students' arrival outlining the recommendations below. These recommendations come from guidance given by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and are based on science. They apply to anyone returning from travel outside of Canada.

If any of the students or chaperones show symptoms during the trip home, they are being asked to distance themselves from the group and put on a mask. In addition, as per HPPH recommendations:

- They are not being advised, if they feel well, to wear masks or gloves upon their return.
- They are being asked to [self-isolate \(stay at home and away from other household members\) for 14 days from the date of their return, self-monitor for symptoms](#), and call their primary healthcare provider if symptoms develop.
- Family members in the household are not being asked to self-isolate but they have been given [advice and resources on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the home and community](#), which includes [self-monitoring for symptoms](#). If household members develop any symptoms, they will also be directed to self isolate.
- If anyone from the group begins to show symptoms of COVID-19, they are being asked to use this [online self-assessment](#) to help determine if they need to seek further care. In addition, the household member should isolate from other household members and remain in isolation until 14 days after their return or symptoms have resolved for 24 hours, whichever is longer AND monitor public health guidance as this advice may change. The family will also need to follow [these recommendations on self-isolation for caregivers, household members and close contacts](#).

We understand the fear and anxiety this situation has caused. Although the students and chaperones have expressed that they are happy, enjoying the trip, genuinely appreciative of being able to travel, they have confirmed that they were very diligent about hand hygiene and social distancing while away. In addition, the importance of the HPPH social-isolation directions upon their return has been discussed multiple times. Students and chaperones have assured us that they will follow these recommendations and help prevent the spread of this illness to our local communities.

The priority of AMDSB, in partnership with HPPH, is always the safety and well-being of our students and staff. We must remember that there are many people in all of our communities returning from destinations all over the world. These individuals are asked to follow the same recommendations of self-isolation and monitoring. Some of the negative comments that we have received via phone and seen on social media are not helpful in this situation and we ask everyone to work together to deal with this unprecedented situation. We encourage everyone to do their part, stay calm and look out for each other.

Statement from Huron Perth Public Health

Dr. Miriam Klassen, Medical Officer of Health, would like to share this important information to the North Perth community:

- Huron Perth Public Health continues to monitor the COVID-19 situation closely in our community, including in North Perth, and is following the guidance of the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) as well as the latest scientific evidence around the world related to this virus.
- We do know that communities in Ontario have seen evidence of community spread of COVID-19, including Waterloo and Ottawa.
- Therefore, it is critical that EVERY person in Ontario practice [social distancing](#), follow proper infection control practices, and follow the current recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, which you can find on our website.
- The current recommendations state that all people who are returning from travel outside of Canada are to self-isolate at home for 14 days. People can view our website for information on how to self-isolate at home and how to care for members of your household that are in isolation.
- The current recommendations are that household members of people who have returned from travel are not required to self-isolate.
- People all over Ontario are currently returning home from travelling outside of Canada and are being advised of these same recommendations.
- For more information, go to: www.hpph.ca/coronavirus - it is being continually updated with the latest recommendations. If you are not able to find the information on our website, you can call our Health Line at 1-888-221-2133 ext 3267.

Dr. Lisa Walsh



Dr. Lisa Walsh, Director of Education
Avon Maitland District School Board