



## PT Responses -PPE and Schools –

(September 2020)

**Request:** From Suzy Wong September 24 2020:

The Health Canada COVID-19 Task Force is seeking to informally reach out to the education sector regarding PPE in schools. Specifically, they would like to ask PTs:

- Are boards/schools in your jurisdiction experiencing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) shortages? If yes, are there particular types of PPE that they are concerned about?
- As schools begin opening, are you hearing that they are using more PPE than expected?
- How are boards/schools in your jurisdiction receiving PPE?

**Six of 12 PTs provided responses, as follows:**

*Note: The Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (JCSH) is a formal agreement of Ministries of Education and Ministries responsible for Health/Wellness in 12 of the 13 Canadian provinces and territories (Quebec is not a member). The Public Health Agency of Canada represents the Federal Government at the JCSH tables in a funding and advisory capacity.*

Jurisdiction	PPE Shortages	Types of Shortage	Use of PPE ↑↓	PPE Source
Alberta	Unknown*		Unknown*	Govt funding/ School authorities
British Columbia	No		No	Focused Ed/ provl procurement/ own suppliers
Saskatchewan	Yes	Nitrile gloves / wipes	Yes (increase)	ED ministry / suppliers
Newfoundland and Labrador	No+	Gloves/price ↑	No	School districts
Nunavut	No	Not required <sup>o</sup>	No	ED department
Manitoba	Yes	Sanitizers / gowns	Yes	Gov MB / supplier networks
Northwest Territories	No		Yes	ECE coordinating; plan ECE purchasing, local sanitizer

\* Not collecting this information <sup>o</sup>Stage 1-no cases

Specific responses - in full:

**Alberta:**

Alberta's government is striking a balance between the need for a standardized province-wide approach in some areas, while allowing for common sense flexibility. All school boards have developed a COVID-19 plan that applies the health measures in a way that works for their school authority

- developed a re-entry toolkit, available at [www.alberta.ca/k-to-12-school-re-entry-2020-21-school-year.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/k-to-12-school-re-entry-2020-21-school-year.aspx), to help prepare parents and students for what to expect in the 2020/21 school year. This toolkit includes videos for students explaining some of the health measures, a guide for parents, frequently asked questions, school posters, a self-screening questionnaire in multiple languages and links to health guidelines.
- provided school authorities with masks, face shields and sanitizer; this represents an investment of \$10 million. As part of the response to COVID-19, we have also provided school authorities with an additional \$250 million in Capital Maintenance and Renewal funding. So far, 79 school projects totalling over \$15 million are moving forward with this primary purpose, including upgrades for enhanced hygiene such as hands-free sinks, automatic flush toilets, touchless soap and paper towel dispensers, automatic doors and water bottle filling stations to replace water fountains. School authorities may also choose to use this funding for upgrades to ventilation systems in their schools, and about \$44 million is being spent on HVAC and mechanical upgrades.

Specific to questions:

- Alberta Education is not formally collecting this information. In general, I was told the feedback on PPE has been positive.
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- PPE is being received by school authorities either from Government organizations funding and some school authorities are purchasing extra

#### **British Columbia:**

- No shortage but occasional delays in the supply chain for specific products (e.g. child sized masks)
- (re: using more PPE than expected) Not as of yet
- Boards/Schools are receiving PPE through Focused Ed (provincial "shared services" agency) or through centralized provincial procurement. Some are working through their own suppliers.

#### **Saskatchewan:**

- Yes, school divisions have raised concerns about being able to source nitrile gloves and disinfectant wipes.

- As schools begin opening, are you hearing that they are using more PPE than expected? Yes, school divisions have indicated that they are going through more masks and disposable gowns than they expected.
- How are boards/schools in your jurisdiction receiving PPE? They are receiving through a combination of bulk purchases from the GoS and by directly sourcing from suppliers.

**Newfoundland and Labrador:**

- Both districts advise no immediate concern regarding shortages of PPE. The only exceptions noted by English School District was scarcity of gloves and weekly price escalation of same.
- As schools begin opening, are you hearing that they are using more PPE than expected? None identified at this time.
- How are boards/schools in your jurisdiction receiving PPE? Districts facilitated all initial ordering of PPE for September startup. Physical deliveries to schools are via traditional ground/air transportation methods.

I wanted to also advise that non-profit groups that provide food in schools in our province (Kids Eat Smart Breakfast Program and the School Lunch Association) have reported that the cost associated with purchasing PPE for their staff/volunteers who support their programs in schools has been high. These extra costs have reduced the amount of money available to purchase food for schools.

**Nunavut:**

Nunavut currently has no known cases of COVID-19 and schools are in what we consider stage 1.

- The Department of Education currently provides all PPE and cleaning products for enhanced cleaning to schools
- At this time PPE does not need to be worn by teaching staff, paraprofessionals or student in schools
- Janitorial staff are using PPE (not as protection from Covid-19, but to stay safe when using cleaning products)
- Currently no shortage of PPE, but this could change if/when requirements of CPHO change if/when schools move into stage 2-4.

**Manitoba:**

- We are receiving some reports about concern regarding available supply, but it has not been widespread as yet. There appear to be some individual situations where sanitizer products and gowns are being consumed at a higher rate than initially planned.

- There is certainly more PPE being used and obtained than in a normal year. This is particularly true for cleaning supplies, masks and gloves. Whether this volume is greater than expected, it may be too early to tell as schools have only been open in Manitoba for 3 weeks. So far, however, I have not had any indication that the demand has been higher than expected.
- Schools and school divisions in Manitoba are sourcing PPE through two means. The Government of Manitoba is providing disposable medical-grade masks, reusable cloth masks and a limited supply of face shields to schools and school divisions right now. For all other PPE, schools and school divisions are sourcing that from their existing supplier networks.

### **Northwest Territories**

- No PPE shortages.
- Re use of more PPE than expected, As schools begin opening, are you hearing that they are using more PPE than expected? We have placed additional PPE orders to prevent shortages from occurring, given the relative isolation of the NWT. Schools are reporting that they are using more masks and hand sanitizer than anticipated.
- How are boards/schools in your jurisdiction receiving PPE? Education, Culture and Employment has coordinated ordering of PPE items and to ensure all schools had what they needed to open on time. Moving forward, Education bodies may eventually be able to purchase their own PPE. They are not ready yet to take this on for themselves as they do not the capacity at the board level given the added demands that schooling during COVID-19 has placed upon them. ECE is anticipating the ability to provide education bodies with hand sanitizer locally made in the GNWT's Taiga Environmental Laboratory.