

CORONAVIRUS
[COVID-19]

MANAGING THE RETURN TO WORK

Information and Recommendations
for Employers

CRHA
Ordre des conseillers
en ressources
humaines agréés



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INTRODUCTION

The Ordre des conseillers en ressources humaines agréés (CRHA) has prepared this guide for employers to assist with COVID-19 prevention efforts. It is designed to help them manage the return to work for their employees after multiple weeks of lockdown.

The content in the following pages is meant as a complement to the information issued by government and public health authorities. The proposed recommendations are intended to slow the spread of the virus in the workplace as much as possible.

You will find pointers on how to organize your workplace, how to welcome employees back and how to foster a positive work experience.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, certified human resources professionals (CHRP) and certified industrial relations counsellors (CIRC) are doing their utmost to implement best practices in the workplace. The goal of these efforts is to safeguard the health and safety of all workers and comply with hygiene and sanitation requirements while this unprecedented crisis unfolds.

Now, more than ever, we need to embrace a positive, constructive attitude in the workplace to reassure workers who may be experiencing anxiety, mental strain and financial hardship. Employers are well advised to implement strict precautions, encourage dialogue, act transparently and be a voice of reason for these employees. By leading the way and taking workers' concerns seriously, they will help restore confidence and reassure those who are still reeling from the crisis.

A smooth return to work requires the cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders, including management, health and safety committee members and union officials.

Legal deposit

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2020

About the Quebec CRHA Order

With nearly 11,000 professional members, the Ordre des conseillers en ressources humaines agréés is the primary reference in organizational human resources practices. It ensures the protection of the public and contributes to the advancement of its CHRP and CIRC members. Through its actions in the public arena, it plays a key influential role in the Quebec workplace. For more information, visit **ordrecrha.org**.

Disclaimer

The recommendations herein are based on formal statements and advisories from public health officials and other experts. They take into account the most recent information about the coronavirus (COVID 19) at the time of publication, but they do not aim to address every question in this regard, nor provide a detailed or comprehensive confirmation of official recommendations. The measures outlined in the following pages are meant to serve as basic guidelines. The contents will be updated as new knowledge becomes available and as the situation evolves.

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UPDATE

[COVID-19] REOPENING THE ECONOMY, SECTOR BY SECTOR

In May, the Quebec government announced the gradual reopening of several industries, adding that it would continue to assess the spread of COVID-19 throughout this economic restart. **Should the spread increase significantly, we might see backtracking** in some of the hot spots or even throughout Quebec.

To guide its decision, the government will refer to the criteria put forth by the World Health Organization (WHO):

- The transmission of the virus is controlled.
- The health system is able to detect, test and isolate cases.
- The risk of spread in vulnerable environments is reduced.
- Preventive measures are implemented in workplaces, schools and other places conducive to the spread of the virus.
- The risk of contamination from foreign visitors is minimal.
- Communities are educated and mobilized.

FOR ALL SECTORS

All employees who can continue working remotely must continue to do so.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

[Reopening and maintaining economy activity \(COVID-19\)](#)



UPDATE

BARS AND RESTAURANTS

- **Monday, June 15:** Restaurants, and bars holding a food licence, reopen except for those located in metropolitan Montreal, the MRC of Joliette and the city of L'Épiphanie.
- **Monday, June 22:** Restaurants, and bars holding a food licence, reopen in metropolitan Montreal, the MRC of Joliette and the city of L'Épiphanie.

Bars without a food licence remain closed until further notice.

Restaurants may reopen their patios and dining rooms. Servers and cooks must wear a mask and visor when the 2-metre distance cannot be maintained with each other or with customers. Restaurants cannot offer buffets or self-service counters (salad bars, bread stations, etc.)

Each restaurant is responsible for determining the number of customers it can hold while maintaining the 2-metre distance between customers from different households. No more than 10 people may share a table.

The provincial government will facilitate modifying or enlarging patios by relaxing regulations. It has also relaxed the rules around the delivery and consumption of alcohol.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Toolkit for the Restaurant Sector](#)

GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

[The government of Quebec wants to offer support to the restaurant industry](#) (in French only)

LA PRESSE

[Les restaurants montréalais pourront rouvrir à partir du 22 juin](#)

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

[Directives de santé publique concernant la réouverture des salles à manger et des autres lieux de consommation du secteur de la restauration](#)
(in French only)

UPDATE

SPORTS, LEISURE, AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- **Monday, June 8, 2020:** Outdoor team sports, training and competitions gradually restart (soccer, baseball, hockey, etc.)
- **Monday, June 8, 2020:** Outdoor individual supervised or guided activities (physical fitness, hiking, yoga, etc.)
- **End of June 2020:** Team sports matches, provided Public Health gives its approval.

Sports business and federations must make sure the two-metre distance is maintained at all times between players.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for the Leisure, Sports and Outdoor Recreation Sector – COVID-19](#)

GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

[Reopening sports, leisure and outdoor activities in the context of COVID-19](#)





UPDATE

ESTHETICS AND BEAUTY CARE

- **Monday, June 1 : All** services reopen in Quebec, except in metropolitan Montreal and the MRC of Joliette.
- **Monday, June 15 : All services** reopen in metropolitan Montreal and the MRC of Joliette.

Businesses that offer esthetics and beauty care include :

- Hairstylists
- Barbers
- Esthetics salons
- Manicure and pedicure services
- Hair removal and skin care services
- Tattoos and body piercing

These may reopen as long as they provide for physical distancing or PPE. They must ask customers whether they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they have the virus before the appointment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

QUEBEC NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

[COVID-19 : Interim Recommendations for Workers Providing Personal Care and Esthetic Services](#)

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Toolkit for the Personal Care and Esthetic Services Sector](#)

PRIVATE HEALTH CARE

Starting June 1st, across Quebec dentists, psychologists, chiropractors, osteopaths, acupuncturists, massage therapists and others may reopen provided they observe the instructions from Public Health regarding hand-washing and physical distancing. If this is not possible, Ppe must be provided.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

QUEBEC NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

[COVID-19: Interim Recommendations for Private Practice Therapeutic Care](#)

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Toolkit for the therapeutic care Sector](#)

[Toolkit for the oral/dental care Sector](#)





UPDATE

DAY CAMPS AND SLEEPOVER CAMPS

- **Monday, June 22, 2020 :** Day camps reopen across Quebec.

Day camps must avoid games that involve personal contact and emphasize outdoor activities. Groups should remain stable, i.e., monitors should supervise the same groups of children where possible.

Sleepover camps will remain closed for the summer of 2020, because they require additional measures given that they service children. However, special camps for disabled individuals may open in the coming weeks.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

QUEBEC CAMP ASSOCIATION

[Guide to reopening camps in the COVID-19 context](#) (in French only)

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for Day Camps – COVID-19](#)

UPDATE

OUTDOOR POOLS, SPLASH PADS AND PLAYGROUNDS

- **Monday, June 8, 2020:** Outdoor pools, playgrounds, and training equipment on private sites reopen.
- **Saturday, June 30, 2020:** Outdoor public spaces including outdoor public swimming pools and wading pools and their washroom facilities, as well as playgrounds in public parks and water fountains.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

QUEBEC NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

[COVID-19 : Pools and water sports](#) (in French only)





PRESCHOOLS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND HIGH SCHOOLS

REOPEN DATE - ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND DAYCARES

- **Monday, June 8, 2020:** School camps for children with learning disabilities reopen in metropolitan Montreal and the MRC of Joliette.
- **Wednesday, July 1, 2020:** Summer school is open to students in Secondary 4 and 5.
- All educational institutions and school and educational daycare reopen in Quebec for staff.
- Daycare services for children under 6 gradually reopen across Quebec.
- Special schools with a local mandate and clientele with disabilities or behavioural problems reopen in metropolitan Montreal and the MRC of Joliette.
- Pre-schools and primary schools in metropolitan Montreal, the MRC of Joliette and the city of L'Épiphanie remain closed until the end of August 2020.
- Pre-schools and primary schools reopen across Quebec.

DAYCARES

On June 1, 2020, all daycares in Quebec have been gradually reopening, including non-subsidized daycares and home daycares, both recognized and not. On June 8, 2020, establishments outside metropolitan Montreal, the MRC of Joliette and the city of L'Épiphanie may receive 75 % of their registered children.

In family settings, a childcare educator may supervise no more than 5 children. Where there are two educators, they may supervise up to 7 children.

Childcare educators must wear personal protective equipment (mask, gloves and protective glasses), wash their hands regularly, and keep children at a safe distance from each other.

Hi-touch objects such as toys, chairs, tables, etc. must be disinfected regularly, as are toilets and diaper stations.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Student attendance will not be mandatory. Parents must contact the administration of their child's school a week in advance to let them know how they will proceed. Students who remain at home will continue to do school work with remote guidance from teachers.

School staff and students must comply with public health requirements in terms of hygiene and physical distancing. Class sizes will be limited to a maximum of 15 students. Schools will adjust student groupings accordingly. If necessary, various facilities such as the library, gym, music room and art room, etc. to reduce the number of students per class. They will also adjust student schedules as needed to stagger foot traffic at the start and end of the day.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education will provide personal protective equipment to school staff.

School bus services will be reassessed in order to protect the health and safety of drivers and students.

The reopening of elementary schools will be carefully monitored by public health authorities. If a case of COVID-19 occurs in a school, the Regional Directorate of Public Health will carry out an assessment and give instructions.

HIGH SCHOOLS

High schools will remain closed until at least the end of August. Distance learning measures will be maintained.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Toolkit for the School Environment](#)

[Toolkit for the Childcare Sector](#)

[Toolkit for the Home Childcare Sector](#)

QUEBEC GOVERNMENT

[Preschools and elementary and secondary schools in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[Safety measures for workers and children in elementary schools and daycare services during COVID-19](#)

[Educational childcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Pandemic \(COVID-19\) Tip Sheets - Daycare](#)

UPDATE

EDUCATIONAL CAMPS AND SUMMER SCHOOL

From June 8 to June 26, educational camps are available to students with learning disabilities in primary and secondary schools in metropolitan Montreal, the MRC of Joliette and the city of L'Épiphanie. Participation is voluntary. There will be no more than 10 students per class. Schools determine the exact schedules for these educational camps.

Summer school is offered to Secondary 4 and 5 students starting July 1st, when recommended by a teacher. This participation is also voluntary.





RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS AND THEIR SUPPLY CHAIN

- Stores with direct front or rear access to the outdoors, and their suppliers.
- Two-phase reopening process, starting later in the territory of the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM):
 - **Monday, May 4, 2020**: Reopening across Quebec, except for the CMM
 - **Monday, May 25, 2020**: Reopening in the CMM.
- Businesses must adhere to the hygiene and sanitation guidelines established by public health authorities and the CNESST (see the [Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide – COVID-19](#)).
- Shopping centres will remain closed until further notice, except for stores with direct access to the outdoors.
- **Throughout the month of May, stores will remain closed on Sunday**, except for gas stations, drug stores and convenience stores

FOR MORE INFORMATION

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Toolkit for the Retail and Shopping Centre Sector](#)

[Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide – COVID-19](#)

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

[COVID-19 Tip Sheet – Retail](#)

QUEBEC GOVERNMENT

[Questions and answers concerning stores, public spaces and services during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

UPDATE

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

- **Monday, June 8, 2020:** Audiovisual production activities resume (filming, preproduction and postproduction).
- Museums, public libraries, drive-ins, recording studios and show taping have resumed across Quebec.

Museums must limit the number of visitors and assign an employee to manage line-ups. They must also institute traffic flow controls so that visitors move in one direction only. Events (conferences, exhibits, educational activities, workshops, etc.) and access to shared materials (computers, audioguides, tablets, etc.) are prohibited.

In **libraries**, members may only access the loan counter. They may not move freely among the bookshelves, review a document on-site, or use public materials such as computers or tablets, etc.

Drive-ins may not open their playgrounds, dining rooms or picnic areas. On-site restaurants may reopen, but only for take-out orders.

Sound and show recording studios and companies must limit the number of technicians to 5 on the site at a time. Spectators are not allowed when recording a show.

The audiovisual production industry must work with smaller teams and limit moving to different locations on the same day. Spectators are not allowed during interior filming, but may be present outside, to a maximum of 10 individuals.

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION
COMMISSION
FOR STANDARDS,
EQUALITY, HEALTH
AND SAFETY IN THE
WORKPLACE**

[Toolkit for the
museums institution
and library Sector](#)

[Toolkit for the
audiovisual production
Sector](#)



UPDATE

CAMP SITES, MARINAS AND SOME TYPES OF ACCOMMODATIONS

On June 1, all camp sites and lodges reopen across Quebec.

It's also possible to stay in a residence for tourists or rent an apartment, cottage or home, **except in metropolitan Montreal and the MRC of Joliette.**

Hotels remain open across Quebec.

Renters of a unit must reside at the same address. If more than five individuals rent a unit, a 24-hour period must be observed before the next household arrives. This delay does not apply if 4 individuals or less stay in the unit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUALITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Toolkit for the accommodations and camping sectors](#)

COURTHOUSE

Courthouses and administrative tribunals are gradually reopening across Quebec.

Courtrooms have been modified in order to observe physical distancing. Access to hearing rooms is limited and bailiff and judge work stations have been partitioned. Traffic flow is controlled and hand sanitizing stations are distributed throughout the common areas. Shared equipment (tables, chairs and microphones) are disinfected regularly.

In parallel, the department of Justice has implemented electronic legal services, such as opening virtual courtroomss, hearings by phone, and electronic document signing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OF QUEBEC

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) : Justice system measures](#)





MANUFACTURING

Companies in this sector reopened on May 25, with no restrictions on the number of employees. However, they must continue to apply health regulations from Public Health and the CNESST.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUALITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE
[Toolkit for the Manufacturing Sector](#)

QUEBEC NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH
[COVID-19 : Interim Recommendations for Essential Manufacturing Sectors](#)

QUEBEC GOVERNMENT
[Gradual resumption of activities under the COVID-19-related pause](#)

CONSTRUCTION AND CIVIL ENGINEERING

Companies in this sector reopened on May 11.

They must apply health regulations from Public Health and the CNESST (see [GUIDE COVID-19 – Construction sites](#) by the CNESST).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

COMMISSION FOR STANDARDS, EQUALITY, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[COVID-19 Guide – Construction sites](#)

[COVID-19 – Toolkit](#)

QUEBEC GOVERNMENT

[Reopening of construction during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[Questions and answers - Reopening of the entire construction industry](#)

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

[COVID-19 Tip Sheet – Construction](#)

ORDRE DES ARCHITECTES DU QUÉBEC

[COVID-19: Guide de survie – Architecture \(Survival guide for architects\)](#) (in French only)



PLANNING THE RETURN TO WORK



The [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) states that businesses must take "all measures necessary to protect the health, safety and physical well-being of workers," as well as "identify, control and eliminate" the risks that threaten their staff.

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk comes from a virus that is spread through contact with respiratory droplets. It can also be picked up by your hands if you touch a person affected by the virus or a contaminated surface or object and then carried to your face.

To meet their legal obligations, employers must develop a **back-to-work strategy** to guide workers after weeks of lockdown. According to this strategy, companies must:

- Update their policy on health and safety in the workplace.
- Revise their business guidelines.
- Define the procedures for resuming operations.

Businesses must create a separate work committee for each of these aspects.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY UPDATE COMMITTEE

- This committee brings together directors, managers, supervisors and employee representatives (union, occupational health and safety committee, or other).
- It must determine all objectives and means used to ensure the health and safety of workers and minimize the risk of spreading the virus, in addition to specifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned during the pandemic.

BUSINESS ORIENTATION COMMITTEE

- A select committee of members of senior management.
- Makes business decisions using available human, financial and material resources and develops a timetable for resuming operations, which will be subject to change depending on the spread of COVID-19.

COMMITTEE FOR RESUMING OPERATIONS

- This committee brings together directors, managers, supervisors and employee representatives (health and safety committee, union).
- Determines the conditions for resuming operations based on the revised occupational health and safety policies and on business decisions made by senior management, and ensures follow-up. Discussions are to be based on common interests, i.e., the health and safety of all personnel and the sustainability of the company's operations.
- This committee must determine, among other things :
 - The recall order of employees;
 - Operational changes;
 - What resources are required (equipment, man-hours, etc.);
 - What training will be offered to employees;
 - The preferred modes of communication;
 - Which individuals will be in charge of preventive measures (employee reception, cleaning procedures, etc.);
 - Any changes to be made to the labour agreement, if applicable.

WORKING WITH TRADE UNIONS



Companies with a unionized workforce should contact the union to ensure the return to work is done efficiently. The union can indeed be a helpful partner to the company, and work with them to :

- Identify the risks of spreading the virus.
- Find solutions to reduce these risks.
- Communicate public health instructions and important messages.
- Identify employee concerns.
- Mobilize the staff.

It is in the interest of companies to include union representatives on the committee in charge of updating occupational health and safety policies, as well as the committee for resuming operations. It must also consider the possibility of assigning key roles to union representatives (as health workers, or to oversee cleaning procedures, etc.), depending on the nature of their relationship with it. However, it must ensure that under no circumstances should these union employees assume a disciplinary role.

To promote constructive exchanges with the union in these exceptional circumstances, companies should base back-to-work discussions on their common interests, namely the health and safety of workers and the sustainability of operations. Both parties must put aside their differences and coordinate in order to send a cohesive message to employees so that their return to work goes smoothly.

To bring the labour agreement in line with public health guidelines during the pandemic, employers and unions must sign a letter of agreement. This document must stipulate what changes are needed with regard to scheduling, holidays, and supplying personal protective equipment, as well as the criteria for employee recall, all this in accordance with the nature of the company's operations.

If the employer and the union cannot agree on a specific provision, an inspector from the Commission for Standards, Equity, Health and Safety at Work (CNESST) can advise them.



FINANCIAL AID TO BUSINESS



The federal and provincial governments have implemented various financial aid measures for businesses. This is a summary of the measures announced and programs available.

FINANCIAL ADVICE ON THE PHONE

SMEs, non-profits and charity organizations experiencing financial difficulty due to COVID-19 may get free advice from an accountant or financial advisor at **1 866 989-1080**. This phone line has been set up by the government of Canada and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Business Resilience Service \(BRS\)](#)

FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS FOR BUSINESS		FOR MORE INFORMATION
CANADIAN EMERGENCY WAGE SUBSIDY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsidizes 75 % of wages or grants \$847 per employee per week from March 15 to August 29, 2020. For all businesses that lost income in the month of March (-15 %), April (-30 %) and May (-30 %). 	GOVERNMENT OF CANADA Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CERB)
EMERGENCY AID TO SALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a loan or loan guarantee of up to \$50,000. Reserved for companies that are active in Quebec, are experiencing financial problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and are not protected by the Law on arrangements with company credit providers or the Law on bankruptcy and insolvency. 	GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CERB) (in French only)
TEMPORARY JOINT ACTION PROGRAM FOR BUSINESS (PACTE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides loans and loan guarantees of at least \$50,000. For companies operating in Quebec, are experiencing liquidity problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and are not protected by the Law on arrangements with company credit providers or the Law on bankruptcy and insolvency. 	INVESTISSEMENT QUÉBEC Programme d’action concertée temporaire pour les entreprises (PACTE) (in French only)
JOINT ACTION PROGRAM FOR MAINTAINING THE WORKFORCE (PACME-COVID-19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes advantage of the economic downturn to provide employee training. PACME’s business file has reached its maximum financial capacity. Collective enterprises and sponsors (sector committees, joint committees, community organizations and others). 	GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC Joint action program for maintaining the workforce (PACME-COVID-19) (in French only)
CANADIAN EMERGENCY BUSINESS ACCOUNT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a loan guarantee up to a maximum of \$40,000. Under certain conditions, businesses will not need to repay 25 % of the loan, to a maximum of \$10,000. Reserved to entreprises with a 2019 payroll between \$20,000 and \$1.5M. 	GOVERNMENT OF CANADA What is the Canadian Emergency Business Account?
BUSINESS CREDIT AVAILABILITY PROGRAM (BCAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guarantees 80 % of a term loan and line of credit up to \$6.25M by Export Development Canada (EDC) et Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC). For small and medium enterprises experiencing financial difficulty in paying wages and operating costs. 	EXPORT AND DEVELOPMENT CANADA Guarantee – EDC Business Credit Program
CANADA EMERGENCY COMMERCIAL RENT ASSISTANCE (CECRA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps small entreprises, non-profits and charities having trouble paying their commercial rent. Organizations that have lost at least 70 % of their income and whose monthly rent is under \$50,000 are eligible. 	CANADIAN MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC) COVID-19 : CECRA for small businesses
SUPPLEMENT TO THE CECRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces losses for commercial landlords by 50 %. All property firms across Quebec are eligible. 	GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC Québec bonifie le programme Aide d’urgence du Canada pour le loyer commercial à hauteur de 140 M \$ (in French only)
REGIONAL RELIEF AND RECOVERY FUND (RRRF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps businesses that don’t qualify for other financial aid programs and have cash flow problems. Small and medium enterprises, co-ops, non-profits, business support organizations and indigenous organizations are eligible. 	GOVERNMENT OF CANADA Regional Relief and Recovery Fund
FISHERS BENEFIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For fishers losing 25 % of their income. Will cover 75 % of losses up to \$10,000. 	GOVERNMENT OF CANADA The Prime Minister announces support for Canadian fishers
LARGE EMPLOYER EMERGENCY FINANCING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides loans starting at \$60M. For businesses with payrolls of over \$300M. 	CANADA INVESTMENT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION Large employer emergency financing
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS STRATEGY PROGRAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps businesses and organizations recruit workers aged 15 to 30. Covers 50 % to 80 % of recruitment costs up to \$14,000. 	GOVERNMENT OF CANADA Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS) program)

CONTINUED WORK-FROM HOME ARRANGEMENTS



Companies must maintain remote work provisions for as long as possible during the pandemic period. It is in their interest to create a work-from-home agreement to set the conditions and duration.

Employers have the same rights and obligations toward remote workers and other employees, specifically with regard to the assignment and supervision of work, absences, harassment prevention, complaints, health and safety, and administrative and disciplinary measures.

Using this approach, some employers can have various teams working on site at different times. While the employees of one team are working on the premises, others can be working from home. With rotating shifts, all staff members can have regular access to the workplace to meet their employer's needs.

To help ensure the success of these operations, all remote workers must have the equipment they need to perform their duties (computer, software, headphones, etc.). It is also necessary to be clear about which communication channels are to be used.

Employers may offer remote work training to support staff experiencing difficulties getting organized at home.

Managers who are not familiar with remote working will have to adapt to these new arrangements using a results-based approach. The key is to trust employees who are working from home and allow them greater freedom, especially when it comes to planning their schedule.

It is also important to be flexible and open to special arrangements with certain employees who voice a preference for working from home or who wish to cut down on their workload for family or other reasons.

Employers need to stay in constant touch with their employees, both on an individual basis and through regular team meetings. These are an opportunity to provide a status update to employees who are working from home and encourage them to collaborate and engage in informal discussions.

As needed, employers should be in a position to offer psychological support to employees who are working remotely or, at the very least, refer them to the appropriate online resources.

In order to help SME and non-profits in their efforts to deal with the various challenges that come with COVID-19, the Ordre des CRHA has developed an arsenal of HR tools and resources.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE OUR ARTICLES :

[Quatre clés pour gérer la performance en télétravail](#) (in French only)

[La gestion du télétravail en temps de pandémie](#) (in French only)

**SEE THE RANGE OF AVAILABLE IN-PERSON
OR VIRTUAL TRAINING :**

ordrecrha.org/services/formations

COVID-19

SOUTIEN RH

ESTABLISHING A POLICY ON WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY DURING THE PANDEMIC

Companies are advised to add an appendix to their workplace health and safety policy specifically addressing the pandemic. In it, they should stress the importance of workplace health and safety issues during the crisis and outline their commitment to creating a healthy, safe work environment that complies with all applicable statutes and regulations.

This policy should also state their health and safety objectives and the measures they have undertaken to achieve these objectives. It should also specify the roles and responsibilities of all employees.



EMPLOYEE HEALTH REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Employers must ensure, among other things, that they keep a close eye on the health of their employees by requiring them to fill out a daily questionnaire before being allowed to access the workplace. Completed questionnaires must remain confidential.

This employee health questionnaire must include three questions :

- Are you experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, trouble breathing, extreme fatigue, sudden loss of smell)?
- Have you been in contact with anyone with COVID-19?
- Have you travelled outside the country in the past two weeks?

Employees who answer yes to any of these questions must return home and place themselves in a preventive quarantine for at least 14 days.

It is permitted to take a worker's temperature upon his arrival at the workplace. However, this must be done by a trained person. The Commission for Standards, Equity, Health and Safety at Work (CNESST) advises against collecting this data outdoors, since the results would not be reliable.

The answers employees provide on the questionnaire and the result of the temperature test must be kept confidential. The company must never make such data public or share them with individuals for whom they are not intended.

HYGIENE MEASURES

Employers must provide all employees working on site with information on the hygiene measures undertaken to help limit the spread of the coronavirus. This information must also be posted in the workplace, especially in common areas.

The basic rules are as follows :



Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based disinfectant



Wear personal protective equipment if it is impossible to keep a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others



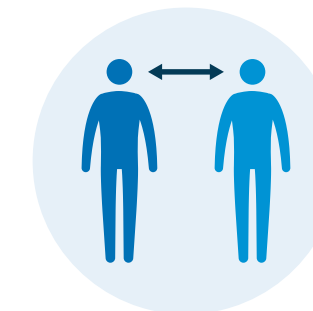
Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, using the crook of your elbow



Use single-use tissues



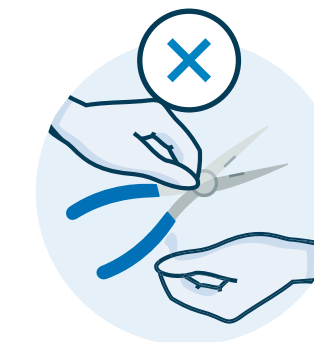
Avoid physical contact such as handshakes, hugs and kisses



Maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others



Regularly disinfect tools and work surfaces



Do not share equipment



Use electronic rather than paper documents whenever possible



RULES FOR ACCESSING WORK PREMISES

Employers may require on-site attendance only if it is impossible for employees to carry out their duties otherwise. **Whenever feasible, work-from-home arrangements should be maintained.**

Work premises must be off limits to occasional visitors. Telephone and digital communications platforms should be the preferred means of interacting with outside parties. If an outside party must access the site, it is essential to ensure they wash their hands upon arrival and comply with physical distancing measures.

Likewise, companies whose business requires on-site access by customers must plan their reopening and organize their workplace and services accordingly in anticipation of their return. This may include requiring employees and customers to wash their hands, enforcing physical distancing and disinfecting objects and surfaces following the provision of a service.

Regular employees who access the work site are subject to mandatory health reporting requirements as well as hygiene and physical distancing guidelines. Should they be required to work in close proximity to other employees, measures must be taken to create a physical barrier between them (partition, personal protective equipment, etc.).

RULES FOR PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN THE WORKPLACE

At all times, companies must ensure that employees can maintain a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from their co-workers. If this distance cannot be maintained, employees must be provided with personal protective equipment (mask, gloves, goggles, etc.). A sufficient quantity of PPE must be available at all times. Companies may also choose to install physical barriers, such as partitions.

If employees cannot comply with physical distancing requirements for a brief period, they must make sure to cover their mouth and nose with the crook of their elbow if they have to cough and avoid touching their face.

MASK AND FACE COVERING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Quebec government recommends the use of a face covering in situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained. This precaution is in addition to other recommended hygiene and physical distancing measures. People with disabilities or respiratory conditions and people who cannot remove their mask without assistance are not required to follow this recommendation.

SEE THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION :

- [Health recommendations for everyone](#)
- Video on [How to use a face covering or a mask?](#)

TRAVELLING OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY

Companies must suspend all business travel abroad. During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital communications are the recommended way to conduct international business.

Employees returning from a foreign country must self-quarantine for 14 days, as stipulated in the federal *Quarantine Act*. Offenders are subject to up to six months' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$750,000. Moreover, if their actions also expose another person to imminent death or serious bodily harm, they can be fined up to \$1 million and sentenced to prison for up to three years.

For more information, see the federal government guidelines at [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Travel restrictions, exemptions and advice](#).

Employees who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 during the quarantine period must notify their employer.

COMPLIANCE WITH PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Employees also have responsibilities in terms of minimizing the risk of infection. Under the provincial *Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety*, they must familiarize themselves with the preventive programs implemented by their employer and take all necessary precautions to ensure their own health, safety and physical well-being as well as that of their co-workers.

PENALTIES FOR OFFENDERS

A person or business that contravenes the Occupational Health and Safety Act is liable to incur criminal sanctions. Depending on whether it is a first offense or a repeat offense, the fines are :

- \$600 to \$6,000 for a natural person;
- \$1,500 to \$12,000 for a legal person.

If a person or a company compromises the health, safety or physical well-being of a worker, they are liable to incur criminal sanctions. Depending on whether it is a first offense or a repeat offense, the fines are :

- \$1,500 to \$12,000 for a natural person;
- \$15,000 to \$300,000 for a legal person.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE OUR ARTICLE

[Veiller à la santé et à la sécurité de ses employés au temps de la COVID-19](#) (in French only)

WORKPLACE ORGANIZATION



In anticipation of resuming operations, companies must assess the layout of their work spaces to ensure compliance with the **physical distancing requirement of 2 metres (6 feet)** and all applicable hygiene measures. Posters reminding employees of public health guidelines must be put up on all notice boards and in other relevant locations.

**TO DOWNLOAD AND PRINT SIGNS AND POSTERS
ON HYGIENE AND SANITATION GUIDELINES FOR
COVID-19 :**

[Publications from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux](#) (free)

[COVID-19 posters, signs and decals via Alpha Signa](#) (\$)

WORKSTATIONS

Employers must make adjustments to the setup of the work environment where employees perform their duties.

As required, the layout of workstations must be modified to ensure a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) between employees. For workstations used by more than one employee, companies must look into new approaches, in consultation with their staff.

Work in shared spaces should be avoided whenever possible. Ideally, employees should each have their own workstation.

If a physical distance of 2 metres (6 feet) cannot be maintained, partitions must be installed. Otherwise, personal protective equipment (gloves, mask, face shield, gowns, etc.) must be distributed to all staff.

Companies must instruct all employees to regularly disinfect their tools and work surfaces. To do this, cleaning products and wipes must be available in sufficient quantities.

Access to common areas must be limited to prevent too many employees from being in the same space at the same time. It is recommended to indicate on the door the maximum number of people allowed in a room and to remove seating. Employers must see to it that the premises are disinfected on a regular basis.

Businesses with on-site customers must advise them at the entrance that new rules are in effect in the establishment, specifically as it relates to restricted access to certain spaces, the limit to the number of people allowed inside and compliance with physical distancing rules. Customers must also be informed if there is a specific flow of traffic to follow, in store aisles for example. Signage to this effect in both French and English, or using pictograms, is recommended.

Checkouts and customer service counters must also be rearranged if possible. A partition – a panel of clear polyethylene or Plexiglas – separating the customer and the cashier is highly recommended. However, it is important to ensure that the employee workstation itself is not closed in. If it is, contaminated particles could be entrapped in the space.

Grocery stores should, wherever possible, eliminate baggers. It is best for customers to bag their own groceries.

Floor decals instructing customers where to wait in line at the checkout area to comply with physical distancing measures are also recommended.

COMMON AREAS

Employers must control access to common areas within their establishment. Wherever possible, these areas must be off limits to visitors or restrict the number of people allowed in at once.

Areas where staff can shower or change must not be used by more than a few people at a time. The maximum number of employees should ideally be indicated on the door. The ventilation in these areas must be upgraded to minimize moisture levels. It is also important to disinfect these facilities with every new work shift using standard cleaning products.

Access to board and meeting rooms must also be controlled. Companies must determine in advance the maximum number of employees who can use these rooms at once, based on their size, and remind users to maintain a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from others at all times. It may be advisable to remove all seating. Any such rooms must be cleaned regularly, in accordance with established procedures.

Cloakrooms where outdoor clothing can be stored for the day are no longer permitted. The preferred solution is to have employees leave their personal belongings in a locker or a sealed bin.

Company cafeterias are another area where the number of employees must be limited. Businesses that require the services of multiple employees at the same time are advised to extend meal times and to restrict or remove a certain number of seats to ensure compliance with the 2-metre (6-foot) physical distancing rule. It is also important to remove books and newspapers and prohibit any other items (utensils, plates, glasses, etc.) from being shared.

Employees who use the cafeteria must wash their hands upon arriving and leaving. Tables, chairs, counters and door handles must be cleaned regularly.

Workers must also maintain a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from other employees in washrooms. Reminders of public health guidelines must be posted in these spaces.

Washrooms must be cleaned at least twice per work shift. Any surfaces touched by visitors (counters, taps, door handles, etc.) must be disinfected more regularly. Soap and paper towels – in the absence of a hand dryer – must be available in sufficient quantities to allow employees to wash their hands. Each washroom must be equipped with a waste bin lined with a plastic bag.

In all common areas, companies must enforce the proper 20-second handwashing regimen, either with soap and water or an alcohol-based gel (with at least 60% alcohol). A mobile handwashing station may be set up in some cases.

Proper hand hygiene must also be promoted in all common areas. Companies must advise employees to wash their hands for 20 seconds at regular intervals throughout the day:

- At the beginning of their work shift.
- Before and after their coffee and meal breaks.
- After touching shared objects.
- After going to the washroom.
- At the end of their work shift.

Employees must also be instructed to remove all jewellery before washing their hands.

SHARED OFFICE SUPPLIES

Employers must see to it that employees avoid sharing work tools. In situations where this is not feasible, it is essential that the tools be disinfected before and after use.

Equipment that is used by multiple employees, such as printers, should be disinfected by employees prior to use. Companies should also ensure that this equipment is cleaned at the end of each work shift.

In the event an employee comes down with COVID-19, employers should make sure all the work surfaces used by the employee have been cleaned, pursuant to their obligation to take all necessary measures to protect the health, safety and physical well-being of their staff.

If a case of COVID-19 is reported, the affected employee's workstation should be shut down for three hours and, if possible, nearby windows should be opened before the area is cleaned. The workstation can be decontaminated using standard cleaning products, in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Companies must determine whether personal protective equipment (PPE) (gloves, masks, face shields, gowns) is useful in reducing the risk of spreading the virus within their establishment. Regardless, PPE should never be considered to be a replacement for proper hand hygiene. Note that PPE is not considered a protective measure against COVID-19 since the virus does not pass through the skin. All PPE must be made available to employees free of charge and in sufficient quantities.

PPE is recommended only in situations where employees have no choice but to work in close proximity to one another or if they are in contact with a person who has contracted COVID-19. Prior training is required to instruct employees on the proper use of PPE.

If employees are required to wear PPE, they must wash their hands before putting it on. They must also comply with all public health guidelines for wearing it and avoid touching their face. PPE that is soiled, wet or damaged must be replaced. Employees must wash their hands immediately after removing PPE.

If the decision is made to provide PPE to employees, handwashing stations must also be available. They can take the form of a stationary or mobile sink or a hand gel distributor (60 % alcohol or more). Disinfecting wipes may also be provided to employees.



CLEANING PROCEDURES



Companies must establish suitable procedures for cleaning and sanitizing work areas. They must start by determining the objects and sites (workstations, vehicles, common areas, washrooms, tools, shared equipment, etc.) that need to be cleaned on a regular basis.

Employers must establish a schedule of cleaning activities based on the flow of employees within the establishment. They must also indicate which employees are responsible for these tasks. For example, individual employees may be required to clean their work space at the end of their shift, while a maintenance attendant could be in charge of common areas.

Employers must closely monitor cleaning operations to ensure they yield positive results. Accordingly, they must determine which staff members are in charge of:

- Coordinating cleaning tasks.
- Communicating cleaning procedures.
- Training staff.
- Enforcing adherence to cleaning protocols.

A supervisor or manager in charge of cleaning operations should be notified if any tasks are not carried out as required and take the necessary corrective action.

Companies must make sure they have all the required cleaning supplies (cloths, paper towels, disinfecting wipes, cleaning products, etc.) on hand at all times.

INFECTED EMPLOYEE

Should an employee contract COVID-19, the employer must clean and disinfect all work areas, along with all equipment and tools.

Health Canada has published a [list of effective disinfectants](#) to eliminate the virus.

The Commission for Standards, Equity, Health and Safety in the Workplace has also posted online a [list of all areas and surfaces to be decontaminated](#).

For further details on managing biological risk in the workplace, [refer to this guide](#) from the CNESST (in French only).



WORK SCHEDULING



As they prepare to resume operations, companies need to assess their employees' skill sets. Flexibility is important so that employees can fill in for a sick co-worker as needed. Employers must also explain to employees the reasoning behind their approach in order to obtain their buy-in.

In addition, employers must anticipate training requirements to help staff generalize their skills so they have the time to adapt to the new context. Finally, employers need to be set up to provide remote training wherever possible.

Preventing too many employees from being on site at the same time takes careful planning, especially at times when physical distancing is hard to maintain, such as the beginning of the work day, breaks, meals and dismissal.

An example of what employers can do: extend meal times to reduce congestion in the cafeteria and make it easier for employees to keep their distance.

Employers can also allocate tasks differently, for example by introducing team rotations or by staggering work hours.

If teams are already established, it is best to keep them unchanged so as to avoid increasing the number of interactions.



EMPLOYER-ORGANIZED TRANSPORTATION



WORK-RELATED TRANSPORTATION

The CNESST recommends reducing the number of passengers in a vehicle by 50%. It is considered acceptable to have a maximum of two employees in a vehicle, providing they are able to maintain a distance of two metres between them.

In vehicles used by workers in the course of their work, there must be disinfectant, wipes, or soap and water provided.

Personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, visors, etc.) must also be provided in the event that workers need to refuel, or be within two metres of a colleague, client, partner or supplier.

The vehicle's interior must be cleaned and disinfected at least once a day. Particular attention must be paid to hi-touch objects and surfaces (telephone, door handles, seat belts, steering wheel, mirrors, knobs and buttons, etc.).

TRANSPORTATION OF WORKERS TO THE WORKPLACE

Companies that supply transportation to the workplace for their employees, to construction sites, forest camps, agricultural sites or other places, must reduce the number of passengers such that they are able to maintain a distance of two metres between them inside their chosen mode of transportation.

Before boarding, the company must ensure employees don't display symptoms of COVID-19 and that they haven't been in contact with someone who's infected. It should also remind them of hygiene measures and coughing and sneezing etiquette.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

In public transportation vehicles, the transport company must set up a transparent partition between driver and passengers—except on paratransit buses—and ensure that a distance of two metres can be maintained between the driver and the passenger area. It must encourage passenger entry through the front door and exit through the rear. A new ticket collection procedure should also be implemented to minimize driver exposure to COVID-19 infection.

In the absence of a partition between driver and passengers, the company must ensure that passengers enter and leave the vehicle through the rear door.

Personal protective equipment must be provided to paratransit bus drivers.

Posters stating the rules of hygiene and coughing/sneezing etiquette must be put up in all public transport vehicles. The CNESST recommends that passengers wear a face cover.

Companies must also ensure that drivers do not change buses mid-shift, and they must implement cleaning procedures. The driver area (steering wheel, door handles, seat belt, seat, physical barrier, etc.) must be disinfected at the beginning of every shift, as well as hi-touch surfaces (ticket terminals, support bars, toilets, doorknobs, workstations, telephones, etc.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

CNESST

[Toolkit for the Public Transportation Sector](#)

INSPQ

[COVID-19 : Mesure concernant le mode d'organisation du travail « Fly in Fly out » ou « Drive in Drive out » \(in French\)](#)

**CANADIAN CENTRE FOR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**
[Pandemic \(COVID-19\) Tip Sheet
- Transportation](#)

SPECIAL SITUATIONS



For various reasons, employees may ask for a transfer or hand in their resignation. Employers must be prepared to react to these requests and deal with employees returning to work after contracting COVID-19.

PREGNANT WORKERS

Pregnant and nursing women need a safe working environment. If there are any risks in their current work arrangement, employers may reassign them to other duties, as outlined in the *Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety*. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CNESST has declared that pregnant and nursing women may stop working without prior consultation of a physician if the risk of contracting COVID-19 is significant. Some conditions apply.

CARING FOR A FAMILY MEMBER

An employee can be absent from work and be eligible for the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) if he or she is caring for :

- A child whose daycare or school is closed;
- A person whose care facility is closed.

An employee can also take time off work and collect CERB if he or she is the parent of an immunosuppressed child, or of a child with a chronic illness.

Employment Insurance

Eligible workers can receive CERB for up to 16 weeks. They can then collect employment insurance benefits if they meet the following criteria :

- They previously held insurable employment.
- They lost their job and are not responsible for the dismissal through their actions or misconduct and have not quit voluntarily.
- They have not worked and have not been paid for at least seven consecutive days in the past 52 weeks.
- They have worked the required number of insurable hours in the past year, or since their last benefit period.
- They are willing to go to work.
- They are looking for a new job.

Employees/parents whose child does not have health problems and whose school or daycare reopens are obliged to go back to work if their employer requires it.

Leave authorized by law

Companies should remain flexible in these exceptional circumstances. For example, they can allow employees to take days off (annual vacation, paid leave or leave without pay), make their schedules more flexible, or temporarily revise conditions of employment in accordance with the employment contract or labour agreement.

The [Act Respecting Labour Standards](#) stipulates that an employee may take up to 10 days per year to fulfill obligations related to the care, health or education of their child or the child of their spouse or due to the state of health of a family member.

“Family member” can refer to the employee’s spouse, child, parent, sibling or grandparent. If an employee is acting as a family caregiver, they may also be absent from work if the family member’s health requires it.

The employee must inform the employer as soon as possible if they need time off to look after a family member. They must also make the necessary arrangements to limit the length of the leave. Under the same legislation, only the first two days of leave are eligible for compensation.

If an employee has been working for the company continuously for more than three months, they may also be entitled to compensation for the first two days of absence in the course of a year.

These days can be split into half-days or taken at various points throughout the year or continuously.





RETURN TO WORK AFTER CONTRACTING COVID-19

An employee who wishes to return to work after contracting COVID-19 and isolating for at least 14 days must fulfill their obligation of protecting their health, safety and physical well-being as well as that of their co-workers, in accordance with the *Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety*.

The Direction générale de la santé publique has set forth a series of criteria that need to be met before isolation can be discontinued :

- At least 14 days have passed since the beginning of the acute phase of the disease.
- The person has not experienced any symptoms for at least 24 hours. Only a residual cough remains.
- The person has not had a fever for 48 hours and has not taken any antipyretic medication to lower the fever.

Given the current situation, businesses must bear in mind that employees with COVID-19 cannot obtain a doctor's note corroborating their symptoms.

HIGH-RISK EMPLOYEES DUE TO AGE, HEALTH OR SPECIAL CONDITIONS

If an employee wishes to voluntarily isolate themselves to avoid exposure to COVID-19, it is necessary to talk to them to learn the reasoning behind their decision and to determine whether a qualified authority has weighed in on the situation.

If the risk factors seem reasonable, the employee must be referred to a qualified authority, who will decide whether continued isolation is preferable during the crisis. If the authority's response is negative, the employee is required to report for work.

In the event an employee refrains from indicating their motivation, let them know they may be subject to disciplinary/administrative measures.

HIGH-RISK PERSON

According to the National Institute of Public Health of Quebec, individuals who are most at risk of developing complications if they have COVID-19 are those who :

- Suffer from chronic diseases (diabetes, heart disease, respiratory or kidney disease)
- Have an immune deficiency
- Are aged 70 and over.

RIGHT OF REFUSAL

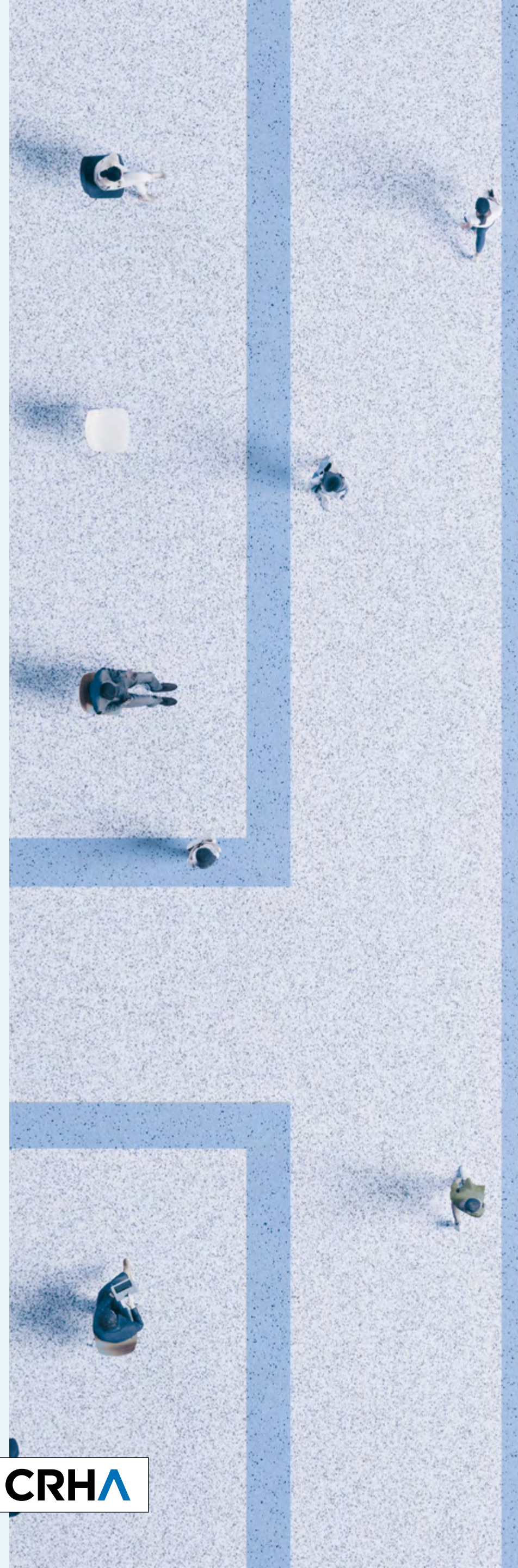
Faced with the risk of the spread of COVID-19, an employee may invoke the right of refusal if they legitimately believe they could become infected. They can exercise this right by presenting reasonable grounds, i.e., proving that their health, safety or well-being is threatened by their work.

This right does not apply if risk is an inherent part of the job, as is the case for police officers, firefighters, ambulance drivers and healthcare workers. It also does not apply if it compromises the physical health, safety or well-being of another person.

If the verdict is unclear, a CNESST inspector can be called in to deliver a swift decision as to whether or not the right of refusal is justified.

For more information, see the CNESST website : [Questions and answers– COVID-19](#)

GETTING READY TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO WORK



Before employees can return to work, employers must let them know of any new practices within the organization, including the requirement to fill out a health questionnaire upon arrival at work and to keep a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) at all times from their co-workers. Employers may also establish a control perimeter, with a corridor for employees on their way in and out of work. Ideally, employees should show up at work 15 minutes earlier than they normally would.

To coordinate employees' arrival and ensure the quality of the measures taken, employers are advised to appoint staff members as **health officers** and provide them with the appropriate training. Ideally, this role should be assigned on a voluntary basis.

Health officers will be responsible for enforcing the occupational health and safety policy. Their role is particularly important in manufacturing and distribution facilities. Health officers must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times.

Health officers will be in charge of:

- Having employees complete health questionnaires at the beginning of every work shift.
- Taking body temperatures (as required).
- Identifying high-risk employees.
- Requiring symptomatic employees to leave the workplace, in accordance with company protocol.
- Ensuring adherence to the 2-metre (6-foot) rule.

Note that taking employees' temperatures may appear intrusive to some. Authorities are still discussing this measure. However, given the current crisis, employers are allowed to do so to protect the health and safety of their employees. Companies will need a scientific protocol to back these efforts and, wherever possible, the services of a healthcare professional. Only a properly trained and protected individual with a valid instrument should carry out this task.

It is important to explain the rationale behind all the measures taken to control access to the workplace so that employees understand and, hopefully, accept these efforts.



PREPARING EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS



Before resuming operations, employers should train managers and supervisors on how to communicate with employees with confidence and assurance. Clear information and guidelines are key to helping them address employees' concerns and providing suitable answers to their questions.

An internal survey prior to reopening may be a good way to glean what employees are thinking and feeling after weeks of lockdown so their return to work is as smooth as possible. Survey findings may reveal various concerns, including worries about the company's future.

Employers must remind workers to exercise due care and caution when returning to work. This includes staying at home if:

- They exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, trouble breathing, extreme fatigue, sudden loss of smell).
- They have been in contact with a person who exhibits these symptoms.
- They are returning from a trip to a foreign country.

Employers are authorized to impose a 14-day quarantine on an employee who meets any of these conditions, since the symptoms of COVID-19 can take up to 14 days to appear in an infected person.

Posters summarizing public health guidelines in this respect must be printed and put up in suitable locations, such as hallways, handwashing stations and areas where disinfecting products are kept.

Employers may also choose to develop a training session on company practices and new rules to follow during the pandemic period. In addition to reminding employees of public health guidelines, this session can also stress that no equipment from work must be taken home (and vice versa) and that a log of employees' whereabouts will be kept. Occupational health and safety coordinators can work in pairs to monitor the various teams.

MANAGING PRODUCTS COMING IN FROM THE OUTSIDE



To minimize the risk of spreading the virus during the pandemic period, companies must limit incoming products, which may potentially be contaminated.

This means, for example, discontinuing product returns and refusing to accept returnable items. As needed, a specific area can be set up where these products can be left for subsequent handling, in accordance with public health requirements. Any such areas must have disinfection facilities, or the products must be left aside before putting them back in circulation.

The World Health Organization has indicated that the risk of transmitting the virus through shipped packages is low. If there is any doubt about a given package, it can be left aside for a day or longer. Most scientific studies indicate that the virus cannot survive for more than 24 hours on dry boxboard.

If there is enough space, it may be useful to create an area designated exclusively to handle incoming shipments, complete with a handwashing station, if possible, and easily accessible cleaning products to disinfect the area. Employers must also review their practices to minimize interactions between employees and delivery people, including contact with products, writing implements and documents.

Whenever possible, orders should be prepared in an area that is separate from the one used to handle incoming shipments in order to avoid an accumulation of merchandise in the vicinity of customers. The back of a warehouse or store may be a good place for order preparation. Ideally, employers should also ensure that any such goods leave the building through an exit other than the one used by customers.



COPING WITH THE “NEW NORMAL”



Employers must take into account the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is a source of stress for everyone, but it can also generate fear, anxiety and mental strain. In the circumstances, company representatives must be particularly sensitive to employees' needs.

It is important for employers to discourage employees from comparing their level of distress or suffering. Individual conversations are the best way of accomplishing this. Larger gatherings should be avoided so employees do not start blowing off steam as a group.

To promote harmony in the workplace, companies must also remind employees of the importance of courtesy and respect. This can include sharing information pieces on compassion and tolerance.

Section 51 of the *Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety* requires employers to provide workers with structures, methods and techniques that protect their health and safety. Even though the act does not explicitly say so, employers are responsible for reducing psychosocial risk factors that may affect workplace health.

Getting back to work after the pandemic may mean large production volumes and a steady pace of work, which may amplify some of these psychosocial risks. Employers must therefore be alert to the mental state of all employees, especially those who seem the hardest hit by the crisis. This includes :

- Asking specific questions or distributing questionnaires to assess team morale.
- Being attentive to any warning signs, however faint, or changes in behaviour (sadness, anger, confusion, etc.).
- Initiating informal conversations with managers working on the front lines and encouraging them to share their problems and concerns.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE OUR ARTICLES :

[La gestion du stress et de l'anxiété en temps de pandémie](#) (in French)

UPDATE

FOREIGN WORKERS



During this crisis, it is in the employer's interest to give special attention to foreign workers, who may be more vulnerable because they are unaware of the services they are entitled to or even the laws applicable in the province or country. The language barrier may also be an obstacle to correctly understanding the crisis and its impacts. Consequently, these workers may experience greater stress, anxiety and even fear.

Under the circumstances, it is in the company's interest to :

- Be empathetic with foreign workers.
- Ensure they know the symptoms of COVID-19, les instructions to follow if the symptoms appear, and financial aid programs put in place to support them when in quarantine.
- Take the time to explain the sanitation protocols and new ways of operating in the company.
- Designate a mentor for each foreign worker to help them adapt to the new rules.
- Promote diversity within the company and be sure to include these foreign workers in the regular team.
- Prohibit hate speech.
- Turn to community organizations for foreign worker support during the crisis.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

[Protocole pour l'arrivée au Québec de travailleurs étrangers temporaires du secteur bioalimentaire dans le contexte de la pandémie de la COVID-19](#) (in French)

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

[Ministers' letter to employers – Temporary foreign workers - COVID-19](#)

WELCOMING EMPLOYEES BACK TO WORK



Employers should arrange individual meetings with all employees as they return to work and preferably announce these meetings in advance. Group meetings are not recommended under the circumstances.

During this discussion between the employee and their supervisor (or manager), the employee may express concerns about the future of the company and, if they are comfortable doing so, share their personal hardships (health, family, finances, etc.). They may also indicate whether they or someone in their inner circle fell sick as result of the virus. The manager must inform the employee that the meeting and the conversation are confidential. Based on the information shared, the manager must ask the employee to take the necessary measures to protect the health of everyone in the organization.

If their back-to-work strategy allows for it, employers may also appoint staff members as health officers (see [Getting Ready to Bring Employees Back to Work](#)).

SENDING SYMPTOMATIC EMPLOYEES HOME

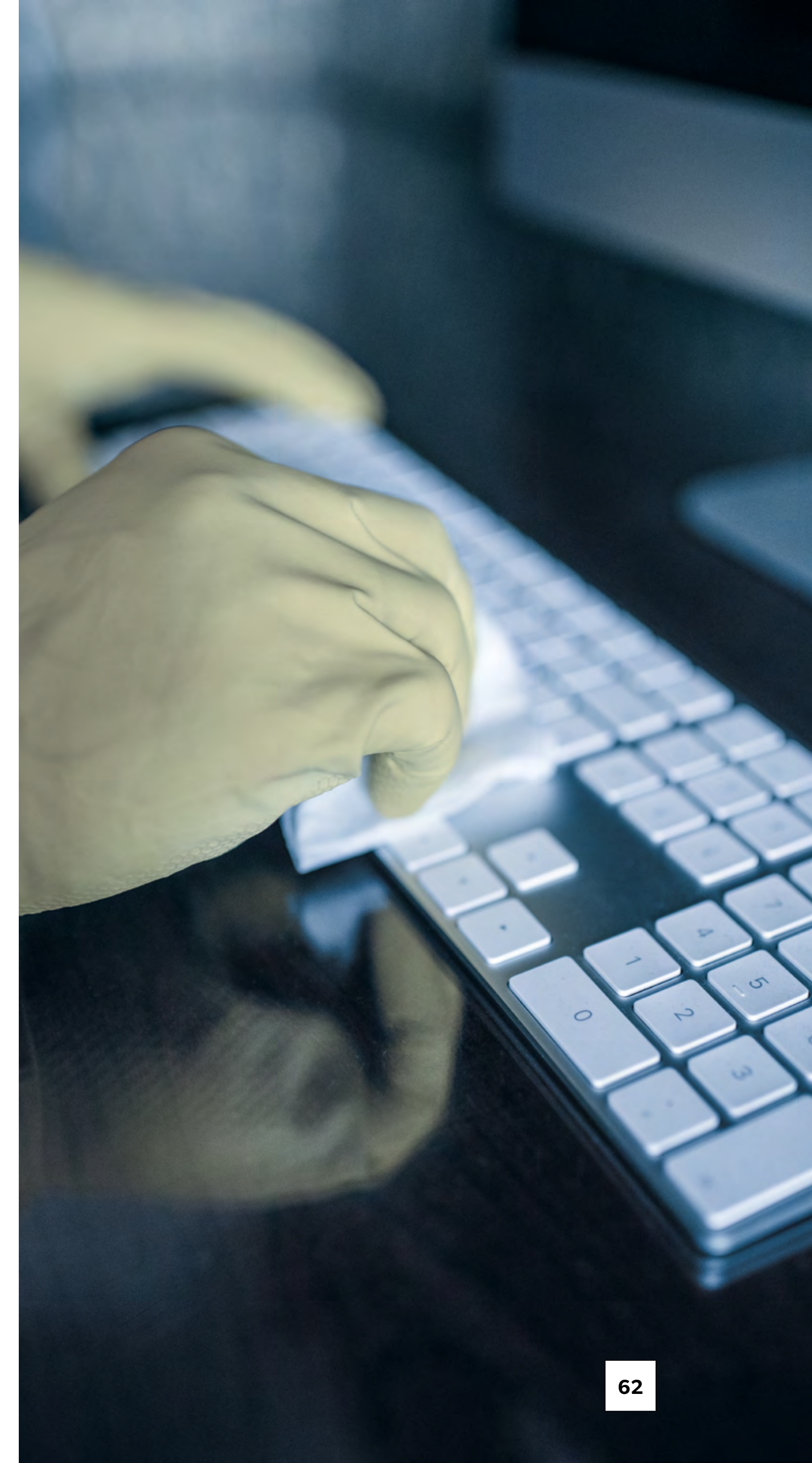
Employers are required to take all necessary measures to protect the health, safety and physical well-being of their employees, pursuant to the provisions of the *Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety*.

Accordingly, if an employee exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 and shows up for work, they must be sent home for a mandatory 14-day period to minimize the risk of spreading the virus.

Note that the [Quarantine Act](#), enacted by the federal government in response to the pandemic, [requires anyone returning from foreign travel to self-quarantine for 14 days](#). Failure to do so exposes them to a fine of up to \$1 million and a prison sentence of up to three years.

In the fall of 2020, the federal government intends to provide a bank of 10 paid sick days to workers with symptoms of the flu or of COVID-19, in an attempt to mitigate the spread of the virus. Discussions with provincial governments on this subject are ongoing.

Should an employee contract COVID-19, the company must proceed to cleaning all work surfaces. If the employee contracted the virus at work, s/he may submit an application for benefits to the CNESST. The link between the infection and the workplace must, however, be supported with ample evidence.



TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CRISIS

It is important to remember that, beyond the considerations related to workplace organization and employee health and safety, this crisis is an opportunity for companies to :

- Review their business continuity plan and learn from the crisis.
- Take stock in order to identify new practices to maintain or develop (for the next crisis).
- Re-examine their corporate vision.
- Rethink corporate policies regarding flexible work schedules and work-from-home arrangements.
- Embrace a more agile management approach to respond more effectively to unforeseen situations.

Companies may even want to re-examine their business model, services, corporate culture and overall practices. This crisis has stirred up many things in a number of organizations. But the situation will gradually return to normal, even if that “normal” is something much different that it was before.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE OUR ARTICLES :

[Besoin de réaligner votre stratégie? Voici quelques outils simples](#) (in French)

[Réinventer les plans de développement à l'ère de l'agilité](#) (in French)

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USEFUL RESOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

GOVERNMENT SITES

QUEBEC GOVERNMENT

- [Gradual resumption of activities under the COVID-19-related pause](#)
- [Questions and answers pertaining to employers and workers during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Reopening of economic activities](#)

INSPQ (INSTITUT NATIONAL DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE DU QUÉBEC)

- [COVID-19 : Occupational health](#)

CNESST (COMMISSION DES NORMES, DE L'ÉQUITÉ, DE LA SANTÉ ET DE LA SÉCURITÉ DU TRAVAIL)

- [COVID-19 – Toolkit](#)
- [Questions and answers – COVID-19](#)

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- [Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

- [Pandemic \(COVID-19\) Tip Sheets](#)

SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES AND BUSINESS OWNERS

QUÉBEC INTERNATIONAL

- [Quebec government measures and information to support businesses and workers](#) (in French)

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

- [A Guide for Managing the Return to Work](#)

IRSST (INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE ROBERT-SAUVÉ EN SANTÉ ET EN SÉCURITÉ DU TRAVAIL)

- [Aide à la planification de la reprise des activités dans les PME québécoises](#) (in French)

UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE (HUMAN RESOURCES)

- [Guide pour gestionnaires sur la planification et la gestion du retour au travail - COVID-19](#) (in French)

DOWNLOADABLE PUBLICATIONS, POSTERS, VISUALS AND INFO SHEETS

PUBLIC INFORMATION

- [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) : Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces](#)
- [Physical Distancing](#)
- [Reduce the Spread of COVID-19. Wash Your Hands](#)

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- [Taking Care of Your Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Stress, Anxiety and Depression Associated with the Coronavirus COVID-19 Disease](#)

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