

Métis Tri-Council Meeting re: COVID-19

Friday, April 24, 2020

3:30-4:30pm

1-877-413-4781 or local 613-960-7510

Conference ID: 9513647

BACKGROUND NOTE FOR PHAC PARTICIPANTS

CONTEXT

- The Métis Tri-Council will meet with Government of Canada officials via teleconference on April 24, 2020. Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) will share a federal update on COVID-19 and the Tri-Council will share an overview of plans and pressures for their respective nations (see agenda in Annex A).
- The Métis Tri-Council is a group of Métis Governing Members including the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) and the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA). Because of ongoing political tensions within the Métis Nation, the Tri-Council Governing Members did not attend the Joint Canada-Métis Health Committee meeting that was held on April 15, 2020.
- Several Health Portfolio ADMs/VPs have been invited. Confirmed to attend are yourself, Kim Elmslie (IDPC) and Tasha Stefanis (HC-SPB). Sally Thornton (HSIB) is unavailable to attend and HSIB is confirming an alternate.

COVID-19 RESPONSE – FEDERAL UPDATE

Funding (see Annex B for details)

- Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan includes \$305 million for a new, distinctions-based Indigenous Community Support Fund, of which \$30 million has been allocated to the Métis Nation. Funding is to be distributed through ISC's existing mechanisms to facilitate the speed at which funding can be received. The funds could be used for measures including, but not limited to:
 - support for Elders and vulnerable community members
 - measures to address food insecurity
 - educational and other support for children
 - mental health assistance and emergency response services
 - preparedness measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- PHAC does not have role in distributing funding to the Métis Nation in response to COVID-19.

Point of care testing (IDPC)

- The Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Lab (NML) in Winnipeg is performing diagnostic testing for the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The NML is working in close collaboration with provincial and territorial public health laboratories to ensure that persons under investigation for the novel coronavirus are confirmed or ruled out through laboratory testing.
- Multiple provincial public health laboratories can now test for the novel coronavirus with a very high degree of accuracy.

[APG]

- BC, AB, SK, ON, QC are able to confirm laboratory diagnostics for the virus that causes COVID-19. For all other provinces, their results undergo additional testing at NML because this is a previously unknown virus and it is good practice to use additional tests to provide further confirmation of initial laboratory findings.
- Presumptive positive cases that are identified through provincial/territorial testing are managed from a public health and infection control perspective in the same manner as confirmed cases.
- Provinces and territories are using the testing approach developed and validated by the NML.
- Furthermore, provincial lab results undergo quality assurance testing at the NML.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (HSIB)

- The Government of Canada is coordinating with provincial and territorial governments to quickly assess and respond to the need for PPE items such as N95 respirators, surgical masks, face shields, nitrile gloves, gowns and other protective clothing, as well as medical supplies such as sanitizer, ventilators, swabs and testing kits.
- PPE and medical supplies are distributed to the provinces and territories according to an allocation framework agreed upon by federal-provincial-territorial (FPT) Ministers of Health. The allocation framework ensures that Indigenous communities, including the Métis Nation are not excluded from supplies distributed through provinces. HSIB indicated that the allocation framework is not available to share.

Mental Health Supports (PHAC/HPCPD/ISC)

- During these difficult times, it is critical that Canadians have access to effective tools to support their mental health and wellbeing, obtain credible and reliable information about mental health and substance use, and access services.
- The Government of Canada has launched the *Wellness Together Canada* mental health and substance use support portal. It is a central resource for accessing confidential mental health and substance use support with respect to COVID-19. This web-based portal provides Canadians with a virtual network of psycho-social information services and supports, and is available on Canada.ca/coronavirus and the Canada COVID-19 app. The Wellness Together Canada mental health and substance use support portal is meant to support existing provincial and territorial services.
- Additionally, ISC maintains the Hope for Wellness Help Line, which offers immediate help to all Indigenous peoples across Canada, including Métis citizens. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to offer counselling and crisis intervention.