

Update from the Deputy Minister on DND's work-from-home posture during COVID-19

This message is intended for Department of National Defence (DND) civilian employees as an update to the Deputy Minister (DM) direction provided 13 March.

Team,

Your flexibility and professionalism as we work through this crisis period continue to motivate me to stay focused and keep going. Thank you. Below are a few updates for you.

1) Most DND employees will continue working from home for now

On [13 March](#), I gave direction to all DND staff: for at least three weeks, all L1 Business Continuity Plans would determine who should physically be on-site and who should work from home. This was also based on guidance from the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer.

Today, I am extending the duration of that direction to last until at least 30 April 2020. We will re-evaluate this status closer to the end of April and update you again.

That said, we will see key differences between the past three weeks, and the next four as the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) deploys domestically.

2) Potential for raised operational tempo for some employees

As DND employees, we all directly or indirectly support CAF deployments with our work. As you're aware, the CAF is in a posture of heightened operational readiness and is preparing to deploy to respond to COVID-19 related Requests for Assistance from the Provinces and Territories. As part of this, your Chain of Command may need you to work at a higher operational tempo than you experienced in March. We will continue to prioritize your safety and wellness during this time, and will work closely with local Health and Safety Committees to ensure all support for CAF operations adheres to health and safety precautions.

Please keep your manager fully briefed on your working conditions and state of well-being. With ongoing school closures, some of you are working from home in close proximity to busy kids. I know that you are doing the best you can under these conditions and that, often, it's really difficult and stressful. We will need to work together to balance what the organization needs and what you can reasonably achieve in the face of competing demands on your time.

3) Civilian supervisors of CAF members will need maximum flexibility

If you are a civilian supervisor with one or more CAF members working on your team, you will need to be prepared for additional disruption to personnel as a result of a delayed Annual Posting Season.

- CAF members may be called to serve in a different capacity relating to the COVID-19 response; or
- CAF members who you are expecting to be posted into—or out of—your team may be delayed.

4) Interprovincial travel screening

We know that some provinces are enacting border controls to restrict unnecessary travel. For example, effective 2 April, anyone attempting to travel between Quebec and Ontario for work will be asked by Quebec police to show their government employee identification at point of crossing. As long as you are not showing symptoms of illness caused by COVID-19, you will be able to proceed.

Those Defence Team members on essential business, please carry your DND or CAF ID with you at all times, be patient, and cooperate with authorities. Everyone is trying to do their jobs under trying circumstances.

5) Keep physical distancing

As much as we need to be flexible about some parts of our lives, we also need to continue being absolutely rigid in our adherence to physical distancing protocols and proper health and safety. This applies whether you are at home or on DND premises.

For the past three weeks, more than 100,000 Defence Team members have been working from home, self-isolating alone or with their families, and responsibly engaging in physical distancing. This diligence must continue. It is the only way we can plank the curve and ensure that we are best-positioned to do our jobs when Canadians need us most.

6) Seek community in non-traditional ways

With several religious and cultural observances coming up in the next few weeks, many of us are being asked to sacrifice precious time that we would traditionally spend celebrating in close physical proximity to family and friends. This break from tradition is as necessary as it is disappointing. Please make the health of your family and community your priority during this period of reflection

As much as we all want to do the right thing, many of us are feeling the impact of isolation on our well-being. Feeling sad, lonely, worried and even incredibly angry about what's happening is a normal human response, and lots of us feel that way. Talking about it can help, as can reaching out to friends and family with the digital channels available to you. Connection, even when it isn't physical, is incredibly important to our well-being, now more than ever.

You can also stay informed and connected with the many resources on the [DND/CAF COVID-19 website](#) and the DND and CAF social media accounts.

Thank you again for your ongoing resilience in the face of this challenge. It's clear just how many of you are coming together to cooperate and to take care of one another. Your actions demonstrate exactly how we will get through this. Keep it up, and stay safe. Our department is critical to who we are as a country. We've got this.

Jody Thomas
Deputy Minister of National Defence
@DMDND_SMMDN