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Subject: News Release: Parents To Receive Enhanced Communications On H1N1: Bjornson

Manitoba News Release
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September 30, 2009

PARENTS TO RECEIVE ENHANCED COMMUNICATIONS ON H1N1: BJORNSON

Parents across Manitoba will have access to daily online updates about unusual absentee rates at their children's schools and in their school divisions, Education, Citizenship and Youth Minister Peter Bjornson announced today.

"We are ensuring that parents have the information they need to make informed decisions regarding the health and safety of their children," said Bjornson. "Being aware of abnormal levels of absenteeism will also remind parents to take proper precautions, such as ensuring that children with flu-like symptoms remain home and that alternate arrangements for child care should be made."

Schools already report unusual rates of absenteeism to Manitoba Public Health. When reports of unusual absenteeism are received, there is a public health assessment to ensure that appropriate advice and direction can be given to the school.

"We have been working closely with divisions across Manitoba to ensure that plans are in place to deal with a potential H1N1 outbreak," Bjornson said.

The minister noted that all reports of unusual absenteeism will be posted on school division websites and will not be specific to flu-like illnesses. Absenteeism may be related to other circulating viruses, even during flu season, or may be for non-medical reasons.

Additionally, Manitoba Family Services and Housing is working with Manitoba's child-care centres to ensure there are communication protocols in place to report unusually high levels of absenteeism to parents.

For additional information on H1N1 flu, school administrators, parents, teachers and students are welcome to visit the provincial website at www.manitoba.ca or the Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth site at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/flu/index.html.

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