
JOINT STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
2020HLTH0086-000499
March 16, 2020

Ministry of Health
Office of the Provincial Health Officer

Joint statement on B.C.'s COVID-19 response and latest updates

VICTORIA – Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, and Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s provincial health officer, have issued the following joint statement regarding updates on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) response in British Columbia:

"We are deeply saddened to announce that three people who had tested positive for COVID-19 have recently passed away, all of whom were residents of the Lynn Valley Care Home. We offer our heartfelt condolences to their loved ones and the staff who cared for them during this difficult time.

"We are also announcing 30 new cases of COVID-19 for a total of 103 cases in British Columbia. The individuals are in the Vancouver Coastal, Fraser, Interior and Island health regions and were confirmed positive, based on BC Centre for Disease Control testing.

"Six people confirmed positive are in acute care, five have fully recovered and all others are self-isolating at home.

"A significant number of new cases are related to the Pacific Dental Conference 2020 held at the Vancouver Convention Centre on March 6 and 7, 2020. We are asking anyone who attended to self-isolate until March 22, 2020.

"Today, we are taking a number of additional steps to address the changing situation in B.C. and ensure our health-care system is best positioned to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"British Columbia's health authorities are directed to immediately move all hospitals in the province to Outbreak Response Phase 2. This means hospitals will undertake only urgent and emergency procedures and will postpone all non-urgent scheduled surgeries. Hospitals will review operating-room capacity daily to prioritize urgent and emergency cases.

"Lions Gate Hospital in the Vancouver Coastal Health region is directed to move to Outbreak Response Phase 3. This means the hospital will accept only emergency patients. Lions Gate Hospital is also preparing to open a dedicated COVID-19 unit to provide care to those with the virus.

"These measures will assist hospitals to redeploy and train essential service health-care providers on critical care related to COVID-19 to ensure sufficient medical supplies for patients and staff who need them most, and to further increase capacity to respond to the potential for a surge of COVID-19 patients requiring acute care.

"We have worked with the College of Pharmacists to advise pharmacies to provide patients with a prescription refill or an emergency supply of their medications if needed. This will give

physicians more time to care for patients with acute care needs. British Columbians are asked to respect this temporary arrangement and are reminded that there is no need to stockpile medication.

“To further enhance the availability of physicians for all British Columbians, the Province will provide physicians compensation for providing virtual-care services. We have also requested all health regulators to begin emergency registration of non-practising or retired health-care professionals, including professionals from other jurisdictions and the armed forces.

“Further, we are moving to restrict visitors in long-term care to essential visits only. Essential visits include compassionate visits for end-of-life care and visits that support care plans for residents based on resident and family needs, for example, families who routinely visit to provide assistance with feeding or mobility.

“In an effort to allow 811 health-care professionals to support more people who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or who require assistance with other health issues, the Province has created a dedicated phone service to provide British Columbians non-medical information about COVID-19. This includes the latest information on travel recommendations and social distancing, as well as access to support and resources from the provincial and federal governments.

“British Columbians can reach service representatives seven days a week, from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., by calling 1 888 COVID19. Information is available in more than 110 languages.

“We have also taken additional action to enhance social distancing and limit transmission. These efforts are not forever, but they are important for now.

“We are issuing a new order prohibiting all public gatherings of more than 50 people. This includes indoor and outdoor sporting events, conferences, meetings, religious gatherings and other similar events.

“On the recommendation of the provincial health officer, the attorney general, minister responsible for the British Columbia Lottery Corporation, has ordered all casinos to close until further notice to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This order came into effect 11:59 a.m. today.

“We are also consulting with education stakeholders on potential recommendations for school operations following spring break.”

Learn More:

To view the provincial health officer's order on mass gatherings, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics>

For more information on B.C.'s updated testing strategy and self-isolation, visit:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing-isolation>

For recommendations on protecting yourself and your community, visit:

[http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))

For the COVID-19 pandemic preparedness and planning materials, visit:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/pandemic-influenza>.

For more information and latest updates on COVID-19, follow the BC Centre for Disease Control on Twitter @CDCofBC or visit the centre's website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>

For the latest audio clips of COVID-19 media availabilities, visit: <https://soundcloud.com/bcgov>

Contact:

Ministry of Health
Communications
250 952-1887 (media line)

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect