
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Emergency Management BC

State of emergency extended to continue B.C.'s COVID-19 response

VICTORIA – The Province of British Columbia has formally extended the provincial state of emergency, allowing health and emergency management officials to continue to use extraordinary powers under the Emergency Program Act (EPA) to support the Province's COVID-19 pandemic response.

The state of emergency is extended through the end of the day on Jan. 19, 2021, to allow staff to take the necessary actions to keep British Columbians safe and manage immediate concerns and COVID-19 outbreaks.

“There’s hope on the horizon for the new year with vaccines beginning, but I want to caution everyone to keep following public health orders,” said Premier John Horgan. “British Columbians have been working hard to flatten the curve, and to do that, we can’t let up too soon. We need everyone to hang in there and continue to do what they need to do to keep case numbers low.”

The extension of the provincial state of emergency is based on recommendations from B.C.’s health and emergency management officials. The original declaration was made on March 18, 2020, the day after Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer (PHO), declared a public health emergency.

On Dec. 16, 2020, the Province announced enhanced enforcement measures to keep British Columbians safe and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. This included strengthening COVID-19 fine-collection measures and asking provincial enforcement officers to actively support police and increase enforcement by issuing violation tickets as appropriate during their normal course of duties or when in public places.

“Most British Columbians are following public health orders, and that’s what will help us get case numbers back down,” said Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. “Having said that, we’re continuing to use enforcement and fines for those who insist on putting lives at risk by ignoring orders. We continue to strengthen the tools officials need to keep people safe, and we won’t hesitate to use them.”

As well, Harry Bains, Minister of Labour, has asked WorkSafeBC to enhance in-person inspections in targeted areas. The Province continues to urge all British Columbians to follow the orders and guidance of public health officials. These are in addition to previous measures under the EPA to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Quick Facts:

- Between Aug. 21, 2020, and Jan. 1, 2021, 574 violation tickets were issued, including 103

\$2,300 tickets to owners or organizers contravening the PHO's order on gatherings and events, 21 \$2,300 violation tickets for contravention of the PHO Food and Liquor Serving Premises Order and 450 \$230 tickets issued to individuals who refused to comply with direction from law enforcement. The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General is continually working to align EPA enforcement orders with those of the restrictions enacted by the provincial health officer.

- Additionally, since the pandemic began, police agencies in British Columbia have issued 77 violation tickets to individuals who were in contravention of the federal Quarantine Act, totalling \$84,266.25. The purpose of the Quarantine Act is to protect public health by taking comprehensive measures to prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases.
- Declarations of provincial states of emergency may be issued by the minister responsible under the EPA. The provincial government can extend the period of a declaration made by the minister responsible for further periods of up to 14 days at a time.
- On July 10, the COVID-19 Related Measures Act came into force, enabling provisions created for citizens and businesses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to continue as needed should the provincial state of emergency end.

Learn More:

On Dec. 16, 2020, Farnworth announced expanded enforcement measures. Details are available at: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0108-002083>

On Nov. 24, 2020, Farnworth introduced a mask enforcement order under the EPA, requiring masks for people over the age of 12 in public indoor settings, unless they are exempt. Details are available at: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020EMBC0061-001960>

For information on all recent orders and guidance, as well as general COVID-19 information for all British Columbians, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/covid19

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

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