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## STATEMENT

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Ministry of Health

### **Statement on the World Health Organization declaring end of COVID-19 as global emergency**

VICTORIA – Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, and Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer, have released the following statement on the World Health Organization declaration of the end of COVID-19 as a global health emergency:

“Today’s news from the World Health Organization marks an important milestone and reminds us of the many challenges we have weathered together these past three years.

“We have been transitioning out of the emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic for some time now, and have been integrating COVID-19 surveillance, monitoring, processes and supports into our regular health system operations.

“COVID-19 is still with us, and will be with us for the foreseeable future, so we need to continue to monitor and to take measures we know protect ourselves and others.

“Thanks to the high level of population immunity, primarily from vaccination and combinations of boosters and infection, the virus is no longer causing severe disease in most people.

“Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have prioritized the protection of vulnerable populations – from seniors, to the very young, those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and those who are marginalized.

“At this time, COVID-19 vaccination requirements for health-care system workers remain in place. We will continue to monitor the situation during this transition phase and ensure our public-health response continues to protect those who are most vulnerable to COVID-19.

“COVID-19 is another respiratory illness we must pay attention to and use the tools we have learned. We encourage everyone to take appropriate measures to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. This includes:

- getting vaccinated and staying up to date on booster doses;
- staying at home if you feel unwell and staying away from people at higher risk of serious illness if you have symptoms;
- wearing a mask if you have respiratory symptoms, or are recovering from a respiratory illness, and you are around others, especially people at higher risk of serious illness; and
- practising good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on areas of our health system that we have been challenged by, and has highlighted some of the inequities in our community that we need to pay attention to. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we continue to incorporate these lessons into emergency planning and response, so we are better positioned and better

prepared for future public health emergencies.”

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