

Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response, latest updates

Victoria

Tuesday, March 17, 2020 5:50 PM

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 a further three people who tested positive for COVID-19 have recently passed away. Two were residents of the Lynn Valley Care Centre and one was a man in his 80s from the Fraser Health region. We offer our heartfelt condolences to their loved ones and the staff who cared for them.

"We are also announcing 83 new cases of COVID-19, for a total of 186 cases in British Columbia. Of the new cases, seven are currently hospitalized, four are in intensive care, five have recovered and the remaining patients are at home in isolation.

"Of the total cases, 116 are in Vancouver Coastal, 47 are in Fraser, 12 are on Vancouver Island, seven are in Interior and four are in Northern health regions.

"This steep increase in the number of new confirmed COVID-19 cases in B.C. is in large part a result of consolidating data this week as our reporting process aligns with the increase in the number of tests that is now taking place in five sites around the province. We anticipate this will level off.

"The provincial health officer has declared a public health emergency. This is an additional step to ensure our province has more tools available to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This declaration enables the provincial health officer to facilitate an even faster response to the rapidly changing situation and enact further measures to protect British Columbians, such as enforcement of orders limiting public gatherings of 50 people or more.

"Effective immediately, businesses with liquor primary licences, such as bars, pubs and night clubs, must close as they are unable to adequately meet the requirements of social distancing. Restaurants and cafes that cannot maintain social distancing of one to two meters between patrons will need to move to take-out and delivery models.

"We also remind British Columbians that public gatherings of more than 50 people – indoors or outdoors – must be cancelled.

“This is the second time the provincial health officer has served notice under the Public Health Act to exercise emergency powers. The first declaration was in 2016, in response to the overdose crisis.

“We would like to remind people that tests are available for all those who need them, but not everyone requires a test.

“To further support people who are wondering if they should be tested, a new self-assessment tool is now available. Before calling 811, we recommend completing the self-assessment at: <http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>

“We continue to remind people to please use hand hygiene, maintain social or physical distancing, and to stay at home if you are sick or at high risk for serious illness. That includes the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions.

“Sufficient physical distancing of one to two meters should be incorporated for workers and customers for businesses and services that will remain open to provide transportation, keep our communities safe and provide essential goods and services.

“For those who have recently travelled outside of Canada and are currently self-isolating for 14 days: leaving your home, hotel or a similar place should only be done for essential errands, such as obtaining medication or food, and with a mask or tissues.

“This is a time to support our friends, family and communities. Purchasing groceries for those isolating or donating blood to support our health-care system are some of the ways you can help. Canada Blood Services has added additional screening measures for increased vigilance to enable the continued supply of blood products for surgery, cancer treatments and emergencies.”

Learn More:

To view the provincial health officer's order on people returning from travel, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics>

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 the 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 its website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>

To make an appointment to donate, download the GiveBlood app, call 1 888 2-DONATE (1 888 236-6283) or book online: <https://blood.ca>

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