

Critical COVID-19 News

Information for employees, medical staff, paramedics and contractors

April 17 at 5:35 p.m.

Sent on behalf of Dr. Maureen O'Donnell & Susan Wannamaker

Chief medical officer and chief operating officer of PHSA's COVID-19 EOC

“We are on the right track. We must keep going.”

This was main message to British Columbians today from Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, and it is advice that holds true for our health care community as well.

All around us there are positive signs that we are – gradually and cautiously – turning a corner with COVID-19, but they have come about as a result of good and difficult decisions based on a new reality that remains unchanged: COVID-19 is present in our communities, new cases will continue to emerge, and the hope we are feeling is predicated on all of us remaining vigilant with strong public health and infection prevention measures, including physical distancing and working from home where appropriate.

As people who work in health care, our patients, families and friends will be looking to us as role models and trusted advisors about what is safe and what actions they can take to protect themselves and our province. We need to stay the course, and continue to support one another in moments big and small, ensuring we are fully present in the needs of today, so we can be healthy and strong as we plan for the delivery of care and services in our “new normal.”

We thank you for your continued dedication to your work, and acknowledge the care and attention you are bringing to every aspect of your lives. We are honoured to be serving alongside you.

Our daily bulletins contain the latest workforce information. **Please read them carefully.**

Highlights:

News from the provincial government:

- 1. Modelling informs next steps for B.C.**
- 2. More online options for students to support social, emotional well-being**
- 3. Canada-US border to remain closed**

Other important updates:

- 4. Survey: Does PHSA's COVID-19 communications meet your needs?**
- 5. Remote Access (Citrix) how-to resources and guidance**
- 6. B.C. launches COVID-19 data dashboard**
- 7. B.C. COVID-19 Digital Assistant answers questions from the public**

8. No bulletins expected this weekend

Modelling informs next steps for B.C.

- Earlier today, Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry and Health Minister Adrian Dix held a technical briefing and subsequent [news conference](#) during which they shared detailed [epidemiological modelling](#) informed by PHSA's Data Analytics Research and Evaluation (DARE) team and the BCCDC.
- The modelling captures trends to date and explores different scenarios going forward related the number of COVID-19 cases B.C. might see and what impact that might have on critical care capacity depending on the rate and extent of relaxation of physical distancing and other societal restrictions currently in place.
- Overall, Dr. Henry stated that physical distancing measures are succeeding at flattening the curve in B.C., but we need to continue to hold the course or we risk seeing another surge.
- It was suggested that provincially, we may look at gradually restarting some scheduled surgeries in mid-May.
- Going forward, the province will move away from looking at models based on scenarios in other countries, such as China or Italy, as we now have more data available from B.C.
- The PHO stressed that we need to find a balance between allowing the economy and health care system continue to function and preventing further transmission, and that we won't be returning to the "old normal" any time soon, rather B.C. will be looking at a more gradual reintroduction that allows for physical distancing, potentially over the next 12-18 months.

More online options for students to support social, emotional well-being

- Today, the [B.C. government announced](#) new, free virtual educational programs for students, parents and educators are supporting social and emotional well-being as part of navigating the new world of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The free, virtual WE Well-being program was recently launched as part of the new WE Schools @home program.
- Accessible for grades K-12 in both English and French, the program is aimed at youth who are experiencing anxiety and social isolation. It places a special emphasis on WE Well-being online learning, including social-emotional learning and resiliency.

Canada-US border to remain closed

- Prime Minister Trudeau [announced today](#) that Canada and the United States have agreed to extend the current closure of the border to all non-essential travel for at least another month as the fight against COVID-19 continues in both countries.
- Travel restrictions across the Canada-U.S. border took effect on March 21. That agreement exempted the flow of trade and commerce, as well as essential health care workers who live and work on opposite sides of the border. Set to last 30 days, terms of the arrangement were due to expire on April 21. The extension will see these restrictions remain in place for another 30 days.

Survey: Does PHSA's COVID-19 communications meet your needs?

- As our president and CEO, Benoit Morin, has said in past town halls, we need to be calm and focused in our response to COVID-19 – and one thing that helps us are the facts.

- We want to know if the communication you're receiving from PHSA, at this moment in time, is meeting your needs or if there are changes we can make to support you better.
- Please take **two minutes** to share your feedback **by Friday, April 24**.
- All responses are anonymous. We will use the summary report to evaluate how our communication channels and approach can evolve.

→ [Take the survey here](#)

Remote Access (Citrix) how-to resources and guidance

- As we've shared in previous bulletins and town halls, PHSA leaders are supporting staff who can [work remotely](#) for the foreseeable future as part of our shared commitment to flatten the curve.
- One of the top questions to the IMITS Service Desk is "**how do I login to Citrix?**" This new [infographic](#) outlines the steps to log in and out of Citrix.
- There is also a quick guide on how to request Citrix, log in and access your files on the network – read the [Top five things to know about Citrix](#).

B.C. launches COVID-19 data dashboard

- [A new, interactive dashboard](#) featuring the latest numbers about COVID-19 launched this week.
- The dashboard provides an overview of testing and case information throughout the province including total case counts, case counts by health authority, numbers of people who are in hospital, in the ICU, who have died and recovered. It is a collaboration between PHSA, BCCDC and the Ministry of Health.

B.C. COVID-19 Digital Assistant answers questions from the public

- The B.C. COVID-19 digital assistant is a friendly chatbot that has taken up residence [on the BCCDC website](#) to help answer questions from members of the public.
- It was built to assist with the significant demand for public information, as a collaboration between BCCDC, Ministry of Health and PHSA's IMITS and Communications teams. It has answered more than 500,000 questions in just over a week!
- The 'bot' provides directions to the latest publicly available information about COVID-19 on the BCCDC and B.C. government websites. It simulates human conversations using natural language processing and machine learning. New responses are being added to it continuously, and the more questions that are asked of it, the more accurate its responses are. It will be added to other websites over time, as its knowledge base grows.

No bulletins expected this weekend

- Unless there is an urgent issue or update required over the weekend, the next Critical COVID-19 News bulletin will be distributed on Monday, Apr. 20.
- We hope you have a lovely weekend!

Thank you for your continued dedication

The service that each and every one of you offers for patients and families – and the essential support you provide to provincial systems – is critical, and is making a meaningful difference in B.C.

Your ongoing sources of information

- We are sending daily updates. Watch for emails from phsacomm@phsa.ca.
- Send in your questions via [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com) using the event code **#PHSATownHall**. 'Like' questions that are similar to yours to let us know the priority topics to cover at our virtual town halls and in future communications.
- Check the [BCCDC's website](#) as a trusted source of information.
- Visit the [staff COVID-19 section on phsa.ca](#) to access [PHSA News](#) and COVID-19 information when off the network.
- For BCEHS alerts and updates, check the [BCAS intranet](#) and in the [BCEHS Handbook](#). *[Note: you must be on the BCEHS network to access these links].*
- For site-specific questions, please check in with your manager or clinical leadership.
- For trusted information from around the world, please check the [World Health Organization website](#).