



May 7, 2020 [Employee updates](#) [Across PHSA](#) , [BC Cancer](#) ,  
[BC Centre for Disease Control](#) , [BC Children's and BC Women's](#) ,  
[BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services](#)

## [VIDEO] Highlights from the May 7 town hall

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Vice President, Communications & Stakeholder

Engagement

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Thank you for continuing to engage with our town halls. On the heels of the Premier's announcement to start "reopening" B.C., we took some time this morning to discuss some of the work being done to establish a "new normal" at PHSA. We also celebrated this year's [PHSA+ Award winners](#) and learned more about the success of the virtual health delivery.

Watch the [town hall highlights](#), or view the [full webcast here](#). You don't need to be on the network to view either video. Below, you will find summaries of the leadership updates as well as time stamps for each of the questions

answered during the town hall. Remember, you can always find the latest bulletins and town hall recordings on our external website at [www.phsa.ca/covid19staff](http://www.phsa.ca/covid19staff).

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## Hot topics

### PHSA+ Award winners - Jaci Edgeworth, chief of staff and vice president, people services

I want to take a few minutes to announce the winners of PHSA+ Awards.

These awards are an important reminder that COVID-19 is a moment in time, and that before this pandemic emerged and long after it passes, the good work of our people prevails.

PHSA's values are the foundation of these awards. The awards recognize excellent work and also highlight how our values are brought to life.

Over 60 nominations were submitted and we have [eight individual winners and five winning teams](#).

I extend sincere congratulations to all the winners and nominees. Please watch PHSA News for profiles on our winners in the coming weeks.

### EOC/Situational update - Dr. Maureen O'Donnell, executive vice president, provincial clinical policy, planning and partnerships

We continue to flatten the curve and with the good news from the Premier yesterday, we will move to slowly and carefully open B.C.

In doing this, we will keep a few key principles in mind - prioritizing self-care for our staff, managing social interactions and always thinking about guidelines for safety of our patients and each other.

The EOC is focusing on supporting COVID but also thinking about a go-forward plan to match the province.

### Operational updates:

BCCDC continues to support surveillance, background work and planning that will help the Provincial Health Office and Ministry of Health.

Our data and analytics team continues to work on modelling, some of which contributed to the surgical announcement that came out this morning.

Labs continue to work on testing.

BC Emergency Health Services continues to work on transport plans, including remote transport.

Supply chain remains an important part of supporting COVID-19. Their work includes analyzing PPE supplies, procurement and delivery, especially with regards to reopening surgery and other services.

Our go-forward plan includes restoring a number of services related to direct and indirect patient care, as well as support services.

We are also looking at academics and when patients can start participating in clinical research studies.

We need to evaluate our process for the new academic year for our medical students, nursing students and other learners.

We are re-evaluating our major organizational strategies and how to keep working on those.

Everything we do will be grounded in Dr. Bonnie Henry's principles about self-care and social interactions. We also need to think about screening, frequent cleaning and protecting our higher-risk employees with underlying health conditions.

There is a lot of work and activity ahead. The pandemic is not over and it will continue. We need to learn to live with it, but we've shown that we are ready for whatever comes our way.

## Public health update - Dr. Reka Gustafson, vice president, public health and wellness and deput provincial health officer

B.C. has succeeded in flattening the curve. In the absence of a vaccine, the risk for COVID-19 is low but it's still here.

We need to remain vigilant and we need to continue to increase our capacity to test, identify and contact trace.

Our public health measures have put us in a good position to reopen the province.

It's very important to maintain proper hand hygiene and to stay at home when you're sick. This is a societal shift in thinking.

The plans to reopen are about more than risk; we also have to consider the ability to mitigate risk as well as the perception of risk.

We imposed restrictions in a short period of time and in that time, we learned more and more about the virus each day. We are now in a place to start reopening and we better understand what measures are necessary.

This pandemic is not over - shutting things down is easy but reopening is more difficult.

B.C. is in a very good place - we can do this because of what we've done in the last three months.

## Story of Virtual Health - Kathy Steegstra, senior provincial executive director, Virtual Health

Thank you for having me to tell this story. I would also like to thank our clinicians and health care providers, who have dealt with a staggering amount of change in a very short period of time and still provide excellent care.

I have two favourite quotes that have helped me throughout the years: "If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together" and "Start the way you intend to end."

The Office of Virtual Health was created in 2017 and though the core team is small, we have a huge network of people we work with to go far and fast.

Our guiding principles are that virtual health would be integrated in clinical operations, clinically-led, system-wide and patient centred.

The top priorities across clinical programs were to have virtual visits, the ability to talk and chat with patients, provide online treatment and monitor patients remotely. We need to keep patients and families healthy at home.

We want to bring care to patients, wherever they may be.

The activity that's happened over the past two months has been unprecedented.

Our virtual health toolkit was produced over a weekend. Solutions and instructions for those solutions were available immediately, such as Skype, Zoom and text messaging.

Over a month, our website views went from 300 to 15,000.

We had to update our technical environment for Zoom. What usually takes several weeks took only a few days in partnership with IMITS.

We established training, webinars and supported clinical programs for implementation for PHSA and we've been asked to support other organizations.

We recently launched the Healthy at Home initiative, which aims to keep patients that are high risk healthy if they don't want to come to hospital.

Provincially we have provisioned over 18,000 Zoom licenses for health care.

In early March, across B.C. we were doing 1,300 virtual health visits a week. This week, we conducted 14,000 virtual visits.

At PHSA we were doing 1,000 virtual visits a month, but now we're doing about 1,000 a week. This increases every day.

Our video remote interpretation project with Provincial Language Services sessions increased by 48 per cent in March and April.

At BCEHS, community paramedics have done 4,000 virtual visits since March 23.

They also have 1,400 patients enrolled in home health monitoring program.

At BC Children's, within one week the neurology department switched from in-person appointments to virtual. This experience has been 100 per cent positive.

Cardiology at BC Children's has 320 new patients enrolled in their virtual platform and have had 230 virtual visits.

A year ago at BC Cancer, six to seven per cent of appointments were carried out virtually. This year, 70-90 per cent of appointments are virtual.

BC Women's diabetes in pregnancy clinic has over 150 patients enrolled in remote patient monitoring.

Trans Care BC has done 176 virtual visits, reaching as far as the Yukon.

At BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, a virtual health task force has been created to ensure clients receive care and care providers can deliver services virtually.

Our goal continues to be that virtual health will be a standard method of care delivery across B.C.

## HR update - Jaci Edgeworth

With regards to working from home and given the province's announcement about reopening, we are working diligently to plan and will share more info over the coming weeks.

We ask that you continue to work from home if you can and please continue to watch for updates.

This week is Mental Health Week and the theme is social connection, which has been a relevant topic throughout COVID-19.

Watch PHSA News for activities to stay connected and make sure to take the survey about your psychosocial wellbeing. We want to hear from you.

Remember that we don't need to be physically close to be close.

## Answering your Slido questions

Remember to visit our [Slido question page](#), which will remain open under the event code #PHSATownHall. 'Like' questions that are similar to yours to help us prioritize topics for future town halls.

You can view the live questions at any time on our Slido page.

Open the webcast recording and skip to the time stamps listed below for specific questions and answers:

### Public health questions

I have coworkers that do not adhere to social distancing policies and have voiced their lack of concern about the virus. How would you suggest I deal with this? **40:15**

Can you provide more insight into the "Recovery Plan", and the timeline of this plan and what the stages of recovery will look like? **39:40**

Should people with "COVID toe" symptoms (skin inflammation/discolouration/burning around the toes) get tested in the absence of respiratory symptoms? **49:25**

On April 21, Dr. Gustafson said things would be different for 18 - 24 months. Can you please expand on what things you were thinking about when you said that? **46:47**

Should we be concerned about food products from sites with positive cases (such as the chicken factory in Vancouver) - is there risk/has there been a recall? **48:30**

Any updates on BC doing antibody testing? Will health care staff be prioritized for testing (frontline and administrative) to see who might have immunity? **42:12**

### IMITS question

Will PHSA IMIT upgrade the network to allow staff to work remotely without requiring Citrix/VPN token? Similar to Fraser Health's set up? **58:20**

### HR-related questions

Many international physicians working in Canada on a temporary basis will be due to leave end of June 2020. The new intake of staff may not be able to enter Canada in time for posts in July. **59:40**

In many places health care workers over 60 years of age are not allowed to work due to increased risk of mortality if they get infected with COVID-19. What is PHSA's decision? **54:36**

Sick coworkers are choosing not to get tested for Covid19. Who is responsible for telling them to self-assess? Should PEARL be asking them to self-assess? **57:15**

Fake news with underlying racism is being shared amongst my coworkers. What are PHSA's policies for racism in the workplace? What can be done to help educate? **53:15**

What is the anticipated timeline for returning to work? **56:23**

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