



Critical COVID-19 News

Information for employees, medical staff, paramedics and contractors

March 23 at 6:15 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*

The situation around COVID 19 – and how it impacts our workforce – continues to evolve rapidly. We have said this before, but it's worth repeating: You each play a critical role in our response to COVID-19. Your work is vital to the 'health' of our health care system, and your contributions, dedication, resilience and commitment to service do not go unnoticed.

We are all in this together.

We will continue to provide you with regular updates on a daily basis. Our daily bulletins contain the latest workforce information. Please read them carefully.

Highlights:

Breaking news from the provincial government:

1. B.C. government commits \$5 billion to COVID-19 Action Plan

Other important updates:

2. Lab testing time

3. Busy signals, dropped calls and automated voice error messages

B.C. government commits \$5 billion to COVID-19 Action Plan

- The B.C. government [announced today](#) that British Columbians affected by the COVID-19 pandemic will benefit from \$5 billion in income supports, tax relief and direct funding for people, businesses and services through the COVID-19 Action Plan.
- The plan dedicates \$2.8 billion to help people and fund the services they need to weather the crisis; \$2.2 billion will provide relief to businesses and help them recover after the outbreak.
- B.C.'s COVID-19 Action Plan builds on the [federal government's COVID-19 Response Fund](#).

Lab testing times

- Over the past week, COVID-19 testing capacity and workflows have improved to the point that provincially, we have almost doubled the number of tests completed each day. We are so appreciative of the employees and leaders behind these efforts.
- At this time, and in accordance with the public health guidelines laid out by Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, we are focused on prioritized testing for the following populations:
 - Health care workers
 - Individuals who are hospitalized or likely to be hospitalized
 - Residents of long term care facilities (this includes clients of Corrections Health Services)
 - Individuals who are part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak
- It may be of interest for the PHSA community to know that the COVID-19 assay in B.C. takes five hours to process, plus interpretation time.
- A number of measures have been implemented to improve the process across the laboratory value chain, which is increasing the capacity to process. The turnaround time to providing a test result is dependent on each of these processes. The COVID-19 testing laboratories aim to provide test results within 24 hours for prioritized specimens, including those for health care workers.
- Continued efforts are required within the laboratories and across the health system to sustain this target turnaround time.
- We are now at a point where there is no backlog of samples in the Lower Mainland. We are monitoring capacity on the Island and in the Interior to ensure we don't get big backlogs in those regions.

Busy signals, dropped calls and automated voice error messages

- With many people across the province working from home, B.C. residents have been making more voice calls using their cell phones as a substitute to office-provided landline telephones.
- This is causing strain on the cellular infrastructure network, resulting in bouts of busy signals, dropped calls and automated voice error messages.
- If you experience any such disruptions, please be aware that this is due to capacity limitations with the telecom provider directly and not with the health authority network. We appreciate your understanding that this is an extraordinary time for citizens all across B.C.

Thank you for your continued dedication

The service that each and every one of you offers for our patients and families – and the essential support you provide to our 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.
- Stay tuned for the next all-staff virtual town hall date! Continue to 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.
- Continue to check the [BCCDC's website](#) as a trusted source of information.

- We have opened up a [new staff COVID-19 section on phsa.ca](#) where employees can access the same information that is posted on POD, but when off the network.
- BCEHS alerts and updates are on 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](#).