



Critical COVID-19 News

Information for employees, medical staff, paramedics and contractors

April 20 at 6:30 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

Something that continues to be underscored by B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry is that our definition of "normal" is going to change. "Normal" will not look the same as it did just a few months ago.

There have been many devastating impacts to COVID-19 and we must continue to support one another. However, we can take heart in the fact that COVID-19 has also been a spark for positive changes. COVID-19 has been a catalyst that will bridge us to our "new normal" – new ways of connecting, working, behaving and living, and some of those new ways may be better than the old.

As demonstrated by today's announcement by Premier John Horgan (outlined below), we are making significant strides in areas like service improvements, new partnerships and provincial collaboration. We are finding new ways of working across boundaries – whether that be through virtual means, or by breaking down invisible barriers that sometimes exist in the health sector – and we are coming up with creative ways to make our information and services more accessible.

We must continue to stay focused on the task at hand to flatten B.C.'s curve and keep our communities safe, but we can also feel optimistic about our future as an organization, and as a province. You are playing a critical part in shaping what PHSA, and our health care system, will look like in the weeks, months and years to come.

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

Highlights:

News from the provincial government:

- 1. Helping rural, remote and Indigenous communities respond to COVID-19**
- 2. B.C. government news over the weekend**
- 3. Community town halls**

Other important updates:

4. Tuesday's all-staff town hall details

5. Testing criteria and new map for collection centres

6. Updates to temporary staff accommodation criteria

Helping rural, remote and Indigenous communities respond to COVID-19

- Earlier this afternoon, Susan Wannamaker, PHSA's executive vice president of clinical service delivery, participated in a news conference with B.C. Premier John Horgan, Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and Dr. Danièle Behn Smith, deputy provincial health officer, Indigenous health, [to announce a new, collaborative framework](#) that will help ensure people living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities in B.C. have access to critical health care they can count on to meet their unique needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future.
- The framework outlines immediate actions to improve health-care services and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including:
 - Improved medical transportation options to larger centres, including flight and ambulance;
 - Housing options for people looking to self-isolate near their families while remaining in their home communities;
 - New and faster COVID-19 testing technology;
 - Culturally-safe contact tracing that respects privacy in small communities;
 - Access to Virtual Doctor of the Day, a program that connects First Nations members and their families in remote communities to a doctor or nurse practitioner using videoconferencing;
 - Options for accommodation near larger centres with more medical services; and,
 - Increased mental health supports in communities.
- As part of this initiative, BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) has prepared significant additional resources to its fleet. This amounts to an additional 55 ground ambulances across the province, including six in the Northern Health Authority.
- In addition, BCEHS has prepared five planes and helicopters plus two on stand-by for medical transport.
- Initially, this expanded transfer network has been activated as part of COVID-19 surge planning, enabling and supporting the swift connection of people living in rural and remote communities to higher levels of care.
- Thanks to thoughtful, evidence-based planning with partners across the province, these resources will remain in place long term, ready for repositioning, as required, to meet local needs.

B.C. government news over the weekend

- **New ticketing measures to enforce Emergency Program Act orders:** On Sunday, April 19 the [B.C. government announced](#) that police and other enforcement officers now have the ability to issue \$2,000 violation tickets for price gouging and the reselling of medical supplies and other essential goods during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. If required, police and other enforcement officers will also be able to actively enforce and ticket those who:
 - exceed the quantity limits on the sale of specified items;
 - do not comply with the requirement for hotel and other lodging operators to provide accommodation at the request of the Province to serve as self-isolation facilities or to support essential workers.

- **Opinion-editorial about pandemic modelling:** On Saturday, April 18, B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry [issued an opinion-editorial](#) about the pandemic modelling that has been done in B.C. Dr. Henry emphasizes:
 - The most recent B.C. modelling shows us that we have made considerable progress in our province, thanks to the immense efforts that British Columbians have taken to 'batten down the hatches' by being physically distant from others and following the orders and restrictions in place.
 - The modelling from B.C. and elsewhere clearly shows that if we relax our measures too soon, we will face more severe and unnecessary damage.
 - We are "in the eye of the hurricane right now, and to fully weather this storm, we must remain 100% committed."
 - Modelling is not a crystal ball. Modelling is a useful tool to help us: understand our situations and the many approaches that are being taken to flatten the curve; assess what is happening right now, in our province and around the world; guide our decision-making for the future; look over our shoulders at past indicators to see how we've done in our attempt to protect people; determine how much longer we need to protect our communities with physical distancing.

Community town halls

- B.C.'s regional health authorities have been collecting online questions for a series of regional virtual COVID-19 town halls to be hosted weekday evenings up until April 23.
- There will be one event for each regional health authority. They will be hosted virtually by local MLAs, one government and one opposition, in each region, and offer responses from regional medical officers of health and health authority CEOs.
- Dr. Réka Gustafson serves as deputy provincial health officer and PHSA's vice president of public health & wellness, providing public health guidance for our organization and the province. However, given PHSA's unique, provincial role, our sites/programs align with the geographical jurisdiction of their respective regional medical health officers (this is why PHSA is not hosting a regional community town hall).
- The virtual town halls are being live streamed on the [B.C. government's Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#).
- COVID-19 regional town halls run 7:15 pm to 8:15 pm on the following dates:
 - Friday, April 17: Vancouver Coastal Health (you can view the recording of VCH's town hall from last week on the [B.C. government's Facebook page](#)).
 - Monday, April 20: Fraser Health
 - Tuesday, April 21: Vancouver Island Health
 - Wednesday, April 22: Northern Health
 - Thursday, April 23: Interior Health
- You can find more information on [the B.C. government's website](#).

Tuesday's all-staff town hall details

- Mark your calendars for our next all-staff, virtual town hall on COVID-19: **Tuesday, April 21, 2020 from 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.**
 - We'll share updates from our Emergency Operations Centre and HR—and answer your questions through [Slido](#). Remember to "like" questions in the queue to prioritize them!
 - We're offering three options for viewing:
 - **Watch the webcast live at 10:30 a.m. using this link:**
<https://mediasite.phsa.ca/Mediasite/Play/cc4694beb9ce47e596120d34d46c542a1d>
- We are currently experiencing certain browser challenges for the webcast,**

so please use Internet Explorer. There is no password needed to watch. If you are prompted to log in, it means the webcast connections are at capacity (we are prioritizing our clinical applications) and you should use options 2 or 3.

- **Listen by teleconference live at 10:30 a.m. by calling: 1-833-353-8610** and using **Participant code 4478028 #**
If you hear a busy signal, try calling again. If a message says the conference bridge is full, use option 3.
- **Watch the webcast at 12:30 p.m. onwards:** Use the same link above to watch the webcast recording on demand. There is no difference between the live or recorded experience and you do not need to be on the PHSA network.

Testing criteria and new map for collection centres

- B.C. is now using testing to quickly identify and address any new community clusters or outbreaks that emerge to avoid a spike in new cases and continue to flatten the curve. You can read more in the [PHO's statement](#) that followed her news conference.
- Anyone with cold, influenza or [COVID-19-like symptoms](#) can be assessed using the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) and tested by a physician or nurse practitioner or at a local collection centre.
- While testing is now broadly available, not everyone needs a test. If an individual has no symptoms, even if they are a contact of a confirmed case or a returning traveller, they do not require a test.
- Visit the [BCCDC website for more details](#). You can also visit the BCCDC's [Information for health professionals](#) for more information.
- View the new map tool for the nearest COVID-19 collection centre:
 - [Version for mobile and desktop](#)
 - [Internet explorer version](#)
- Note, if you filter by health authority, there is only one location that displays as PHSA's (at the BC Children's & Women's campus). However, PHSA staff are able to visit any location as long as they follow the instructions listed.

Updates to temporary staff accommodation criteria

- The Ministry of Health and provincial health authorities have partnered to ensure a consistent approach to temporary staff accommodation during COVID-19.
- Together, we have expanded the criteria for employer-paid accommodation in order to provide continued support to health care workers throughout the province during the provincial state of emergency.
- The eligibility criteria now includes:
 - Health care workers - exposed and can't go home due to compromised family members and/or don't have the capability to self-isolate
 - Health care workers - exposed and do not want to go home as they do not want to risk exposure to family
 - Health care workers - not knowingly exposed but do not want to go home due to potential exposure to compromised family members
 - Health care workers - not knowingly exposed but do not want to go home due to potential exposure to family members
 - Health care workers who are working extended shifts and there are safety risks for travelling home
 - Health care workers unable to secure transportation to/from work
 - Redeployed health care workers - healthy
 - Redeployed health care workers - exposed/sick

- In this context, a health care worker means: all health care providers, health service providers, support staff working within ancillary services within a health care, mental health, or addictions treatment setting, and paramedics.
- You can [find more information and apply on PHSAs website](#).
- If you have questions, please email TempStaffAccomm@phsa.ca.

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](#) 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](#).