

CLR-INFO

[CLR Members,](#)

Please find the latest updates on the current situation in the province.

Provincial Update

[B.C. takes next step in balanced plan to lift COVID-19 restrictions](#)



As of Friday, March 11, 2022, B.C.'s indoor mask order is being repealed along with eased restrictions on long-term care visitors, faith gatherings and overnight camps for children and youth. Today's announcement also sets a pathway to lift additional COVID-19 restrictions, including the BC Vaccine Card requiring proof of vaccination, on April 8.

Learn More: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022HLTH0081-000324>

[COVID-19 pandemic update](#)

Daily update on COVID-19

gov.bc.ca/covid19



As of Wednesday, March 9, 90.7% (4,521,087) of eligible people five and older in B.C. have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 86.6% (4,315,064) have received their second dose.

B.C. is reporting 274 new cases of COVID-19, for a total of 351,415 cases in the province.

Since December 2020, the Province has administered 11,388,672 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Pfizer

Pediatric COVID-19 vaccines.

Learn More:

For a situational update on COVID-19 in B.C. K-12 schools, visit: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_sitrep/K12_Situation_Report/SitRep_K-12_February2022.pdf

For information on when to get a COVID-19 test: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/when-to-get-a-covid-19-test>

For information on COVID-19 treatments including Paxlovid: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/treatments>

[Rapid tests for people 60+ at pharmacies](#)



Starting March 7, 2022, rapid antigen test kits will be available through community pharmacies to people aged 60 and older. Eligible individuals can pick up one kit containing five tests every 28 days from participating pharmacies at no cost. Individuals should pick up a test kit when they are asymptomatic to use at a future time when they have symptoms.

As of March 3, the Ministry of Health has shipped 3.9 million tests to pharmacy distributors. B.C. is expecting to receive an additional 9 million tests from the federal government, which will support the province's strategy to further distribute tests to members of the broader community.

Learn More:

For more information on the government's distribution of rapid tests: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/testing>

For information on rapid antigen testing for COVID-19: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/rapid-antigen-testing>

[Health-care workers, ECEs focus of changes to B.C.'s immigration program](#)

The Province is responding to the crucial need for more health-care workers and early childhood educators (ECEs).

Changes will be implemented for the B.C. Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) Skills Immigration stream that prioritizes these occupations and increases support for the care economy. These changes prioritize health-care workers and ECEs in the application process and will increase the number of people nominated in these occupations for permanent residence. Changes also immediately provide a pathway to permanent residence for people already living in B.C. and working in these sectors.

Learn More:

B.C. PNP Program: <https://www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate-to-B-C/B-C-Provincial-Nominee-Program>

B.C.'s Economic Plan: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/plan>

March – Women’s Month

B.C. moves toward pay transparency measures



The parliamentary secretary for gender equity, with support from the minister of labour, is leading work to close the gender pay gap by moving closer to equal pay for equal work through new pay transparency legislation.

The Province will undertake consultations, beginning this spring, with Indigenous organizations, public- and private-sector employer groups, business and union organizations, equity-seeking organizations and groups that work to create equal opportunity for women, as well as employers who have already established pay transparency policies.

B.C. has one of the largest gender pay gaps in Canada with women making, on average, approximately 20% less than men.

The next phase of the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy



Mar. 8, Mary Ng, the Federal Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, celebrated International Women’s Day by announcing the Women Entrepreneurship Loan Fund, the next phase of the \$6-billion Women Entrepreneurship Strategy.

While progress has been made since the launch of the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy in 2018, access to capital, particularly in smaller amounts, remains a significant barrier for many women entrepreneurs seeking to start or grow their businesses. To help address this barrier and ensure that women entrepreneurs have the tools and financing they need to succeed, the Government of Canada allocated \$55 million in Budget 2021 to support increased lending to women entrepreneurs.

Women entrepreneurs will be able to apply for loans of up to \$50,000 through these organizations. Information on when they will be able to apply for the microloans will be available on the organizations’ websites and on the Women Entrepreneurship Loan Fund web page in the coming months.

Related Links:

[Women Entrepreneurship Loan Fund](#)

[Women Entrepreneurship Strategy](#)

Work Safety

[B.C. proposes new asbestos abatement requirements under Workers Compensation Act](#)



The provincial government recently introduced Bill 5 – 2022: Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2022, which proposes new protections to help keep workers safe from the danger of asbestos.

The proposed amendments include the establishment of requirements that asbestos abatement contractors must be licensed to operate in British Columbia, and that workers and employers who perform this work must complete mandatory safety training and certification.

The bill is currently being considered by the Legislative Assembly. Upon passage of the bill, WorkSafeBC will implement the new requirements.

Learn More:

[Asbestos health and safety information](#)

[Asbestos inspectional initiative \(commercial\)](#)

[Asbestos inspectional initiative \(residential\)](#)

Transportation and Infrastructure

[New five-lane Steveston Interchange moves ahead](#)



As part of the program to replace the George Massey Tunnel, the Province is taking the next step to replace the Steveston Interchange, which will improve connections for vehicles, transit users, pedestrians and cyclists. The team chosen to design and build the Steveston Interchange Project is:

- Flatiron Constructors Canada Limited; and Urban Systems Ltd.

The next step is to finalize an agreement with the preferred proponent. With a successful contract award, construction is planned to begin later this year and be completed in 2025.

Learn More:

More information on the Highway 99 Tunnel Program is available online: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation-projects/highway-99-tunnel-program>

Mental Health & Substance Use

[Expert panel urges safer supply, evidence-based system of care to reduce deaths from illicit drugs](#)

A panel of subject-matter experts convened by the BC Coroners Service is calling for increased access to a safer supply of drugs and creation of an evidence-based continuum of care to better support substance users and reduce the number of illicit drug-related deaths in B.C.

The recommendations are included in a report examining the circumstances around 6,007 deaths from illicit drug toxicity between Aug. 1, 2017 and July 31, 2021.

Learn More:

BC Coroners Service Death Review Panel: A Review of Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths – Released March 9, 2022: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/death-review-panel/review_of_illicit_drug_toxicity_deaths_2022.pdf



Stay safe,

Ken McCormack | President & CEO



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