

## Joleen Kaminski

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**From:** CLRInfo  
**Sent:** March 12, 2021 6:50 AM  
**To:** Ken McCormack  
**Cc:** Paul Strangway; Joleen Kaminski  
**Subject:** COVID 19 Update - March 12

**Importance:** High

### [CLR Members,](#)

Please find important updates on the COVID-19 situation:

### [B.C. easing COVID-19 restrictions to allow outdoor social gatherings up to 10 people](#)

Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry has introduced a new provincial health order allowing for outdoor social gatherings of 10 or fewer people. The new order comes into effect immediately. Henry said it means British Columbians can meet friends outside and have a coffee or they can meet grandparents outside. The guidelines will require people to socially distance outdoors but will be able to gather at parks and on private property including backyards. However, it should be the same 10 people, Henry said, not different groups of 10 people. There are no changes to the current indoor gatherings.

The easing of restrictions comes as cases of COVID-19 continue to grow in the province. But Henry says there is very little evidence of transmission of the virus taking place outdoors.

The province is also bringing in a similar policy for St. Patrick's Day for liquor sales as put in place for New Year's Eve. The last call for alcohol sales will be at 8 p.m. at restaurants, bars and liquor stores. All other restrictions remain in place for restaurants and bars including only being able to sit at a table with people in your household or household bubble.

On Thursday, B.C. announced 569 new cases and 3 deaths, which brings the provincial total to 86,219 cases and a total of 1,397 people who have lost their lives due to COVID-19. Totally 79,829 people recovered from the disease – 93% of all cases.

Read joint statement on B.C.'s COVID-19 response: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0020-000457>.

### [British Columbia opened vaccine registration for seniors aged 85+ on Thursday](#)

Wednesday, Health Minister Adrian Dix said that starting at noon on Thursday, all health authorities are accepting calls from those 85 years of age and older (65+ for Indigenous Peoples). "Most people over the age of 90 have already booked their appointments," Dix said.

The main provincial page has been updated with details of this change <http://gov.bc.ca/bcseniorsfirst>.

### [Vaccine clinic locations available](#)

The website links for vaccine clinic locations are now live. Please follow the below links as per the respective Health Authorities:

- Northern Health: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/covid-19-vaccine-plan#nh-resources>
- Interior: <https://news.interiorhealth.ca/news/covid-19-vaccines/>
- Fraser Health: [www.fraserhealth.ca/vaccineclinic](http://www.fraserhealth.ca/vaccineclinic)
- Vancouver Coastal: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>

- Island Health: [www.islandhealth.ca/covid19vaccine](http://www.islandhealth.ca/covid19vaccine)

### **Fraser Health could see major COVID-19 spread through May if current trends hold**

B.C. health officials are once again warning an increase in contact rate would lead to a massive surge of COVID-19, especially in Fraser Health. Dynamic modelling presented by the province on Thursday showed that if British Columbians reduce social contacts the spread of the virus could disappear in the province by May. But if indoor, non-masked face-to-face contact rates go up just a little more, the province would see daily new cases of the virus climb to more than 1,200 province-wide by May.

The modelling does not factor in the impact of vaccines on spread or what impact the current vaccination plan would have on case counts.

British Columbia is now second in Canada when it comes to daily COVID-19 cases counts per capita. Only Saskatchewan has more than B.C.

Public health's data also showed the vaccine is working to slow virus spread. Comparing long-term care residents to non-long term care residents, the numbers show those vaccinated have a much lower rate of contracting the virus. At the beginning of December there were as many COVID cases in long-term care in a single-week period as there everywhere else in the province. By mid-February the weekly cases count was around 2,800 non long-term care cases and 20 long term care cases.

To view the March 11, 2021, modelling presentation, go to BCCDC: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/modelling-projections>.

### **Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccine approved in Canada**

Canada has now approved four different coronavirus vaccines after giving the green light to Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 shot.

Unlike Pfizer and Moderna's vaccines, the Johnson & Johnson shot is an adenovirus-based vaccine. It was built using a kind of virus, which causes colds in chimpanzees. The adenovirus is altered to carry a gene for the coronavirus protein, which can then train a person's immune system to recognize the actual coronavirus if it ever enters the body.

It only requires one dose and has been approved for use in individuals aged 18 and older and is effective in older adults, said Dr. Supriya Sharma, Health Canada's chief medical advisor.

The vaccine is significantly easier to ship and store, as it can be kept in a refrigerator (between 2 C and 8 C) for at least three months — much longer than the Moderna vaccine — rather than a freezer.

In clinical trials, it showed an overall efficacy of 66% in preventing moderate to severe COVID-19. Canada has pre-ordered 10 million doses of the vaccine, with options to order up to 28 million more.

Read the official statement: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2021/03/health-canada-authorizes-janssen-covid-19-vaccine.html>.

### **Ottawa clarifies CEWS rates**

Ottawa has announced it is planning to maintain the rate structures for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) until June 5, 2021.

This means that the maximum base wage subsidy rate for active employees would stay at 40%, and the maximum top-up wage subsidy rate for employers most adversely impacted by the pandemic would stay at 35%, so the maximum combined wage subsidy rate would stay at 75%.

For furloughed employees, the weekly wage subsidy for the period would be the lesser of the following: the amount of eligible remuneration paid in respect of the week and the greater of: \$500 and 55% of pre-crisis remuneration for the employee, up to a maximum subsidy amount of \$595.

This is to ensure that people's wage subsidy stays aligned with benefits under employment insurance (EI), says the government.

"Employers would also continue to be entitled to claim under the wage subsidy their portion of contributions in respect of the Canada Pension Plan, EI, the Quebec Pension Plan and the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan for furloughed employees," according to the government.

In August 2020, [the federal government launched an updated CEWS calculator for employers](#). Since the wage subsidy program launched, an organization's decline in revenues has generally been determined by comparing its change in revenues with the previous year or early 2020. But since the COVID-19 pandemic has gone on for a year, the government now says the prior reference periods would be based on calendar months from 2019, effective as of the qualifying period from March 14 to April 10, 2021.

### **Tax benefits to support businesses**

As B.C. businesses work to transition to a post COVID-19 economy, government will open applications for two tax benefits to support businesses. These tax benefits include a temporary PST rebate on select machinery and equipment, and a refundable tax credit for employers, which encourages the creation of new jobs for B.C. workers or increases in payroll for existing low- or medium-income employees.

Applications will open in the coming weeks. These programs were announced as part of StrongerBC: B.C.'s Economic Recovery Plan.

For more information on the B.C. Increased Employment Incentive, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/employer-health-tax/employer-health-tax-overview/increased-employment-incentive>

For more information on PST rebate on select machinery and equipment, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/sales-taxes/pst/rebate-machinery-equipment>

Learn more about tax information for businesses: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/tax-changes/budget-changes>

### **Vaccines to boost B.C. economy more than previously expected, according to RBC report**

RBC economists are now forecasting B.C.'s real GDP will grow 5.9% in 2021 — up from the 5.1% growth projected in December 2020.

"British Columbia started to ease restrictions before many other provinces, which will speed up the recovery of many of its service industries. We expect consumers will show up en force when the time comes," RBC economists Robert Hogue and Carrie Freestone wrote in their March 10 forecast.

Business and public sector plans will see capital expenditures rise by 5.7% this year. The province has major projects underway, including the LNG Canada terminal in Kitimat, Site C hydroelectric dam and Coastal Gas Link pipeline.

The bank is also boosting its housing starts forecast for the province to 37,200 units — up nearly 3,000 units since the December forecast.

Similar developments across the country look promising for B.C.'s wood products industry and exports, the economists noted, adding the province's own housing market will see growth resulting from strong demand and declining inventories.

Immigration, a long-time driver of housing demand on the West Coast, has significantly declined during the pandemic. But Ottawa revealed plans in October 2020 to bring in 1.2 million immigrants over the next three years to address labour shortages and boost the economy. The return of international students is also likely to drive up demand for housing in the coming year.

B.C.'s projected 5.9% growth follows forecasts for Quebec (6.5%), Ontario (6.2%) and New Brunswick (6.1%).

“The respective speed and extent of the phasing out of restrictions will largely determine when the economic engine in each province will rev up. The rebound in commodity markets and prices have boosted the prospects for resource-heavy provinces,” the outlook stated.

Stay safe.

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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