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From: CLRInfo
Sent: March 26, 2021 8:09 AM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Maria Sushkova
Subject: COVID-19 Update - March 26

Importance: High

[CLR Members,](#)

Please find your fresh updates on the COVID-19 situation:

[COVID-19 Rapid Testing will become available for the B.C. Construction Industry](#)

B.C. construction industry will soon have the opportunity to screen asymptomatic employees for the evidence of COVID-19. The Government of Canada health officials have supported asymptomatic screening of workers, especially those working in close proximity to each other. Health Canada has approved a number of antigen testing devices, in particular the Abbott Laboratory's Panbio nasopharyngeal and nasal tests and the BD Veritor Plus System. The Antigen Point of Care Testing (POCT) does not replace the regular laboratory-based PCR tests. If a POCT indicates a positive result, the person should quarantine and take a PCR test.

The recommended frequency of Antigen POCT is 2-3 times a week in high prevalence areas and once or twice a week in low prevalence areas.

While official documents from the B.C. health authorities are being awaited, a user manual for administering Panbio Antigen Test, including training and competence documents, were published on the B.C. Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) website. The manual can be found [here](#).

[Vaccines on the way for Site C, LNG Canada, Trans Mountain workers](#)

Northern Health announced it is in consultation with B.C.'s Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer to vaccinate workers at high risk industrial work locations.

Northern Health stated there will be additional supply of COVID-19 vaccine for immunization programs targeting high-risk industrial settings while phase two of B.C.'s age-based immunization program continues to be implemented.

B.C. will distribute the AstraZeneca – SII Covishield vaccine at large industrial project worksites, specifically those where workers live or work in congregate settings. High priority sites include LNG Canada, Coastal GasLink, the Trans Mountain Pipeline, BC Hydro's Site C project and Rio Tinto Alcan. Additional industrial settings will be targeted in the coming weeks.

Officials stated in the coming days, approximately 15,000 doses will be distributed to the industry where it will be given to workforces at project clinic sites.

Northern Health said vaccinating workers in the north will help protect rural, remote and First Nations communities ahead of the start of phase three vaccinations in April.

[People deemed clinically extremely vulnerable prioritized for COVID-19 vaccine](#)

People at higher risk from COVID-19 due to existing medical conditions, such as various forms of cancer, transplant recipients and severe respiratory conditions, will be able to register for their COVID-19 vaccine beginning Monday, March 29, 2021.

The accelerated timelines for B.C.'s COVID-19 immunization plan mean approximately 200,000 people in B.C. aged 16 years and older who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are eligible to receive their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in the coming weeks. Some of the CEV population will have already been immunized as part of B.C.'s age-based vaccine program (currently 75 years and older).

The CEV-based booking process will run parallel to the ongoing age-based booking schedule. This schedule is being accelerated, starting with those born in 1945 able to book starting Wednesday, March 24. The revised health authority eligibility call-in schedule follows:

- age 76 (born in 1945) – Wednesday, March 24 at noon
- age 75 (born in 1946) – Thursday, March 25 at noon
- age 74 (born in 1947) – Friday, March 26 at noon
- age 74+, and CEV population (must have invitation letter to book) – Monday, March 29 noon

Learn More:

For the full CEV list and criteria, visit: <http://gov.bc.ca/cevCOVID>

To learn about B.C.'s COVID-19 Immunization Plan and the Phase 2 rollout, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/bcseniorsfirst and www.gov.bc.ca/covidvaccine

Easing restrictions, amendments to the order

Mar 23, the Province amended the health order, allowing for outdoor religious gatherings.

Religious worship services may be held outdoors (including in open-sided tents and under overhead coverings). Before, during and after the service, people must not gather or socially engage. Masks are required at all times by everyone in attendance. Organizers must collect information for contact tracing, supply hand sanitizer and caution those at risk, including seniors and those with underlying medical conditions or compromised immune systems, from attending.

Outdoor gatherings: Up to 10 people can gather outdoors. For example:

- Up to 10 people can gather at a park or beach
- Up to 10 people can gather in the backyard of a residence

All restrictions for indoor gatherings remain in place. No indoor gatherings of any size are allowed. Patios and outdoor areas at restaurants, pubs and bars are **not included** as places to gather with 10 people at one table.

Gatherings inside residences or vacation accommodations: No social gatherings of **any size** are allowed inside the residence with anyone outside a household or, for those living alone, their core bubble.

Province raises fines to further enforce COVID-19 public safety

Fines for promoting and attending gatherings that contravene the provincial health officer's (PHO) order just got more expensive.

Effective immediately, an amendment to the Violation Ticket Administration and Fine Regulation raises the fine for promoting and for attending a non-compliant gathering or event from \$230 to \$575. The current fine for those who organize or host a prohibited event remains the same at \$2,300.

A \$230 fine will continue to apply to a range of COVID-19 violation measures, including failing to wear a mask and failing to abide by patron conditions. The increased fine aimed at non-compliant events reflects that this behaviour is generally more risky than other offences in the \$230 category, but less egregious than the offences in the \$2,300 category.

The specifics around orders of the provincial health officer, including the number of people allowed at gatherings, will continue to be set at the direction of the PHO.

More information on types of provincial tickets and fine amounts is available [here](#).

[Additional visitors and longer, unmonitored visits to be allowed in B.C. long-term care](#)

Beginning April 1, all residents in long-term care and assisted living will be able to have frequent, routine opportunities for social visitation. Eased restrictions include:

- removing the requirement for a single designated social visitor to allow for additional family and friends to visit long-term care and assisted living residents;
- expanding the number of visitors so up to two visitors, plus a child, will be allowed to visit at a time, allowing people to connect in small groups;
- changing the allowable location of visits so family and friends can visit in residents' rooms without staff present; and
- allowing physical touch between visitors and residents, provided appropriate infection prevention and control measures, like masks and hand hygiene, are in place.

Social visitation will continue to be suspended during outbreaks and will continue to require advanced booking, visitor health screening, use of medical masks and frequent hand hygiene.

[Health Canada issues label change and guidance on the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Mar 24, Health Canada updated the product label for the AstraZeneca and COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccines to provide information on very rare reports of blood clots associated with low levels of blood platelets following immunization with the AstraZeneca vaccine. Following reports of these rare adverse events in Europe, Health Canada has worked closely with European regulators to review the evidence and has updated the product monograph. The Department has also issued [guidance](#) for healthcare professionals and vaccine recipients on the potential symptoms to monitor.

In Canada, the provinces are administering the COVISHIELD version of the AstraZeneca vaccine and Health Canada has not received any reports of these very rare events to date.

As the COVID-19 vaccine rollout continues in Canada, Health Canada will continue to monitor the use of all COVID-19 vaccines closely and examine and assess any new safety concerns.

For further information on COVID-19 vaccines authorized by Health Canada, including post-market updates, please visit [Health Canada's COVID-19 vaccines and treatments portal](#).

[Government announces extension of Canada Emergency Business Account to help small businesses](#)

Mar 22, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Chrystia Freeland, and the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Mary Ng, announced that the deadline for new **Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)** applications is being extended from March 31 to June 30, 2021.

This deadline extension applies to any new applications for CEBA loans of \$60,000 or to new applications from businesses that have already received the \$40,000 loan and intend to apply for the additional \$20,000.

Launched on April 9, 2020, CEBA provides interest-free loans of up to \$60,000 to small businesses, to help cover their operating costs, such as rent, utilities and insurance, during a period where their revenues have been temporarily reduced. These loans are partially forgivable as repaying the balance of the loan on or before December 31, 2022 will result in loan forgiveness of up to 33% (up to \$20,000).

As of March 18, 2021, more than 850,000 CEBA loans have been approved, representing nearly \$45 billion in credit disbursed.

More information on eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found [on the program's website](#).

The **Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS)** provides a direct and easy-to-access rent and mortgage subsidy of up to 65% of eligible expenses to qualifying businesses, charities and non-profits. This support is available directly to tenants.

Qualifying organizations that have been significantly restricted by a mandatory public health order issued by a qualifying public health authority can receive an additional 25% of rent support through the Lockdown Support. The combined

effect of the rent subsidy and the Lockdown Support is that hard-hit businesses, non-profits and charities subject to a lockdown can receive rent support of up to 90%.

The **Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)** covers up to 75% of an employee's wages for qualifying eligible employers to keep and re-hire employees and avoid layoffs.

[Vital projects help workers impacted by COVID-19](#)

Opportunities to work on more than 180 land-based projects are helping people begin their economic recovery from COVID-19, as part of the provincial response plan.

B.C. expanded its existing Forest Employment Program (FEP) with an additional \$12 million. FEP is a three-year, \$15-million program created in 2019 to provide short-term work opportunities for contractors and workers in B.C.'s Interior affected by indefinite and permanent closures in the forest sector.

As announced, this base funding received a \$12-million boost as part of B.C.'s COVID-19 response. The program expanded in 2020-21 to include contractors and workers impacted by COVID-19 and those in Coastal B.C., making the program available throughout the province.

Projects are in land-based priority areas, including Indigenous partnership, backcountry safety, ecosystem restoration, fencing and range infrastructure, forestry, recreation upgrades, rural roads and wildfire mitigation.

This announcement is part of B.C.'s \$10-billion COVID-19 response, which includes StrongerBC: BC's Economic Recovery Plan.

Learn More: [Stronger BC](#), [Forest Employment Program](#).

[Province continues to support communities, regional districts during pandemic](#)

The COVID-19 Safe Restart operating grants will deliver an additional \$10 million in funding shared among the 27 regional districts in the province by the end of March 2021. The funding will assist regional districts with the delivery of regional and local services that have been impacted by COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Safe Restart Agreement is providing \$540 million in direct support to B.C. local governments to help communities manage the impacts of the pandemic. The Province distributed \$415 million in COVID-19 Safe Restart grants to all 188 local governments in B.C. in November 2020 to help with operating costs and respond to pressures caused by the pandemic.

Since then, the provincial government has continued to provide funding to local governments, including a \$100-million program to support people experiencing homelessness and strengthen communities, and a \$15-million program to improve the efficiency of development approvals. Applications for those programs are open through the Union of B.C. Municipalities.

The Safe Restart Agreement is funded equally by the governments of B.C. and Canada.

Learn More: [B.C.'s economic recovery plan](#), [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#).

[British Columbia considers paid time off for workers to get COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Workers in B.C. may soon be eligible to get paid if they miss work to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Premier John Horgan said Wednesday the province is looking to follow Saskatchewan's lead in amending labour codes. The Saskatchewan government amended health and safety regulations so employees who want to get a vaccine can leave work for up to three consecutive hours without losing pay or benefits.

B.C. Labour Minister Harry Bains is looking at whether British Columbia can make the changes through amending regulations. The changes would be similar to rules that give workers up to three hours paid off to vote in elections.

[Provincial stats](#)

The information below is current as of 3pm on Thursday, March 25, 2021:

- New cases: 800
- Total cases: 94,769
- Deaths in last 24 hours: 5
- Total deaths: 1,446
- Total recoveries: 87,351 (92%)

Stay safe.

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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