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From: CLRInfo
Sent: January 7, 2022 4:21 PM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Maria Sushkova
Subject: CLR INFO - Jan 7

Importance: High

[CLR Members,](#)

Please find the important updates and reminders on the current situation in the province.

Provincial Update

[COVID-19 pandemic update](#)

As of Friday, Jan. 7, 2022, 88.5% (4,410,494) of eligible people five and older in B.C. have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 83.1% (4,142,030) have received their second dose.

B.C. is reporting 3,144 new cases of COVID-19, including six epi-linked cases, for a total of 276,875 cases in the province. There are 33,184 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, and 240,198 people who tested positive have recovered. Of the active cases, 349 individuals are in hospital and 93 are in intensive care. The remaining people are recovering at home in self-isolation.

Education Minister Jennifer Whiteside joined Health Minister Adrian Dix and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry to make the announcement during a live news conference Friday.



Whiteside said there will be enhanced safety measures in place at schools including staggered break times, virtual assemblies, and visitor restrictions.

Last week, the province announced a staggered return to school in January due to the spread of Omicron, and school administrators have been using this time to prepare contingency plans, including functional, phased closures for when too many staff are sick or required to isolate.

Dr. Henry announced she is ordering B.C. business owners to reactivate **COVID-19 safety plans**. All B.C. employers open during the pandemic once again must have approved health and safety protocols in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Henry also said that a supply of rapid test is on the way from the federal government and should arrive next week. She said all rapid tests in the province now are currently spoken for and are being used in long-term care for health-care workers and remote Indigenous communities. When the new batch arrives from Ottawa, Henry said the tests will be available to test symptomatic school staff late next week and, eventually, will be available to support families to test children at home.

For more information visit:

[Provincial health officer's orders and guidance](#)

[Ministers', PHO statement on support for health-care workers, COVID-19 testing](#)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bc-covid-update-1.6307474>

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8495596/covid-bc-back-to-school-plan-friday-omicron/>

[Pandemic Relief Programs for Businesses](#)



Federal and provincial support programs for businesses impacted by health measures related to the COVID-19 have been updated in response to new restrictions brought in to address the spread of the Omicron variant.

The Canadian government has temporarily expanded the Local Lockdown Program so businesses can qualify if one or more of its locations is subject to a public health order that has reduced the entity's capacity at a location by 50% or more, or if activities restricted by the public health order accounted for at least 50% of the entity's total qualifying revenues during the prior reference period. These temporary changes will remain in effect until February 12, 2022. [Read more.](#)

The provincial COVID-19 Closure Relief Grant will provide fully funded grants to businesses that had to close due to the December 22, 2021 PHO orders. Grants of \$1,000 to \$10,000 will be available to businesses that have fully closed and can be used to cover expenses like rent, insurance, employee wages, maintenance and utilities. Applications for the COVID-19 Closure Grant are expected to open later this month and remain open until the end of February. [Click here](#) to see eligibility requirements.

Federal Update

[Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada on January 7, 2022](#)

Jan 7, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) issued a summary with the latest national numbers and trends on COVID-19 situation.

Currently, COVID-19 epidemic activity is accelerating rapidly as exponential growth of Omicron, which is now the predominant strain, continues across Canada. Although evidence from ongoing surveillance and recent studies indicates that the risk of hospitalisation is lower for Omicron compared to Delta, the sudden acceleration of Omicron and enormous volume of cases is expected to add an additional strain on the healthcare system.

Immunization for all those who are eligible, but are yet to receive their primary series, remains a top priority. Although uncertainties remain, evidence suggests that while two doses of vaccine may not provide good protection against getting infected, a two-dose primary series still provides good protection against hospitalisation. Encouragingly, the latest evidence indicates that a third dose improves protection against both infection and hospitalisation due to the Omicron variant.

While COVID-19 is still circulating in Canada and internationally, a vaccines plus approach continues to be essential to the pandemic response in Canada. This includes layering vaccination with timed and targeted public health measures and individual protective practices such as staying home/self-isolating if you have symptoms; getting tested if symptomatic and/or as recommended; being aware of risks associated with different settings; following local public health advice and consistently maintaining individual precautions. [Learn more](#)

[Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit provides \\$300 per week to affected workers](#)

Expanded access to the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit (CWLB) is now in effect. Previously announced in



December, the program now includes workers in regions where provincial or territorial governments have introduced capacity-limiting restrictions of 50% or more.



The benefit will provide \$300 (\$270 after taxes withheld) per week in income support to eligible workers who are directly affected by a COVID-19-related public health lockdown, and who have lost 50 per cent or more of their income as a result. Payment will be retroactive to Dec. 19, 2021. [Learn more](#)

[18 million COVID-19 rapid tests could arrive in B.C. in January](#)

Ottawa is ramping up efforts to deliver COVID-19 rapid tests to provinces amid a surge in the highly transmissible Omicron variant that has pushed B.C. past its testing capacity.

Federal Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos said during a Wednesday news conference 140 million more tests would be delivered to the provinces and territories by the end of the month. They will be distributed on a per capita basis.

[Learn more](#)

Other COVID Related Updates



[U.S. government advisers recommend COVID-19 booster shots for young teens](#)

Influential government advisers in the United States are strongly urging that teens as young as 12 get COVID-19 boosters as soon as they're eligible, a key move as the U.S. battles the Omicron surge and schools struggle with how to restart classes amid the spike.

All Americans 16 and older are encouraged to get a booster, which health authorities say offer the best chance at avoiding the highly contagious Omicron variant. Earlier this week, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized an extra Pfizer shot for kids ages 12 to 15 as well.

[Read more](#)

Weather Alerts

[Winter storm shuts down highways, leaves thousands without power as high winds forecast for South Coast](#)

More weather alerts are in effect for several regions of British Columbia as winter storm conditions continue to wreak havoc on the province's highway and utility systems.

Environment Canada says heavy snow is forecast for the province's Interior on Friday and is warning drivers about hazards on major highway routes, some of which have been closed.



Much of the north has been placed under extreme cold alert and, as B.C. Hydro crews scramble to restore power to thousands of customers on the South Coast, a wind warning has been issued for Metro Vancouver and Greater Victoria.

[Read more](#)



[Port Mann Bridge and Alex Fraser Bridge now open following winter weather](#)

Winter operations forced the Port Mann Bridge to close in both directions Thursday night. It reopened around 6 a.m. Friday but the eastbound HOV lane will remain closed for winter operations, according to Drive BC.

The Ministry of Transportation put out a notice Thursday afternoon, warning the bridge could be closed if the weather continued to worsen.

For updates and to plan alternative travel routes, please check: DriveBC.ca

Labour

[Workforce will benefit from five paid sick days beginning Jan. 1](#)

Employers and workers throughout B.C. are reminded that, as of Jan. 1, 2022, eligible employees are entitled to a minimum of five paid sick days each year if they have worked at the organization for at least 90 days. The detailed communication was sent to our members earlier this week. If you have any questions about this new sick leave requirement, please do not hesitate to contact CLR.

[Read more](#)

[WorkSafeBC reminding employers and workers to take precautions when working in cold weather](#)



With cold temperatures and winter conditions continuing to be in the forecast for most of B.C., WorkSafeBC is reminding employers and workers to take precautions and stay safe when working outdoors.

WorkSafeBC provides [the safety tips](#) for reducing the risks to workers from cold weather.

[Learn more](#)



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