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From: CLRInfo
Sent: April 22, 2021 1:36 PM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Maria Sushkova
Subject: COVID-19 Update - April 22

Importance: High

[CLR Members,](#)

Please find recent updates on the COVID-19 situation.

[Joint statement on B.C.'s COVID-19 response, latest updates](#)

Apr 21, Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s provincial health officer, and Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, issued the joint statement regarding updates on the COVID-19 response in British Columbia. The excerpts from the statements are below:

"Today, we are reporting 862 new cases, for a total of 121,751 cases in British Columbia. There are 8,906 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, of which 483 individuals are currently hospitalized, 163 are in intensive care. The remaining people are recovering at home in self-isolation.

"1,456,946 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca-SII COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in B.C., 88,335 of which are second doses.

"People 30 years and older are now eligible to register for a vaccine in the age-based program on the Get Vaccinated website. People aged 40 and up are also now eligible to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine at their local pharmacy or through special clinics in 13 high-risk communities.

"One of the steps [to break the chains of transmission of COVID-19] is the Workplace Closure public health order, which gives WorkSafeBC the ability to close businesses for at least 10 days under the direction of health authority medical health officers.

Learn More:

For the April 19, 2021, PowerPoint presentation, visit:

https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/19.04.21_ProtectingPeopleDeck_COVID-19.pdf

For the April 15, 2021, modelling presentation, visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/modelling-projections>

[Dozens of cases of 'double mutant' COVID-19 variant confirmed in B.C.](#)

British Columbia health officials confirmed more than three dozen cases of a COVID-19 variant first detected in India that is being looked at as a possible contributor to rapid spread of the virus in that country.

The Ministry of Health said the province had identified 39 cases of the B.1617 variant as of April 4, but that it hadn't been flagged as either a variant of concern or variant under investigation at that point.

B.1617 has now been designated a variant of interest, and the BCCDC and the BCCDC Public Health Lab are reviewing genetic sequencing information and linking to case details and will be able to provide an update on the number and nature of these cases later this week.

The variant is being described as a "double mutant" due to a pair of mutations that the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare says may confer "immune escape and increased infectivity."

India has reported more than 250,000 new cases of COVID-19 daily this week and doctors are investigating whether the variant could be part of the reason.

[New vaccine schedule invites those 18+ to register this week](#)

As B.C.'s Get Vaccinated program moves forward, the schedule for age cohorts to register was updated as follows:

- **Monday, April 19** – Registration opened for people aged **40 and up**
- **Tuesday, April 20** – Registration opened for people aged **35 and up**
- **Wednesday, April 21** – Registration opened for people aged **30 and up**
- **Thursday, April 22** – Registration opened for people aged **25 and up**
- **Friday, April 23** – Registration opens for people aged **18 and up**

The fastest way to register is online at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/getvaccinated.html>

People born in 1976 and earlier (45 and up), Indigenous peoples 18 and up, and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable are already invited to register through B.C.'s new Get Vaccinated system in one of three ways:

- Quickly online, 24-7, at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/getvaccinated.html>
- Through a provincial call centre between 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Pacific time) at 1 833 838-2323
- In person at the nearest Service BC location

B.C.'s age-based program runs parallel to the pharmacy program for people age 55 and up. Now, anyone over the age of 55 is eligible to be vaccinated with the AstraZeneca vaccine in local pharmacies throughout the province. A full list of participating pharmacies is here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/pharmacy>

Since the Get Vaccinated provincial registration and booking system started on April 6, more than 1.1 million British Columbians have registered and more than 400,000 have booked their shot.

As of April 17, 2021, more than 1.2 million people in B.C. have received their first vaccine dose.

Learn More:

To learn more about when it is your turn to be immunized, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/getvaccinated.html>

For technical immunization information, visit the BC Centre for Disease Control's website:

www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine

For more information on what to expect when you go to get vaccinated for COVID-19, visit:

www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/getting-a-vaccine

[Province shifts vaccine strategy to include high-transmission communities](#)

People born in 1981 or before (40+) living in the following 13 communities are invited to book their vaccine appointments at additional community clinics starting this week (April 19-23), following a change in the use of AstraZeneca:

- Dawson Creek
- East and West Newton
- Fleetwood
- Kensington
- North Delta
- North Surrey
- Panorama
- Port Coquitlam
- South Langley Township
- Squamish

- West Abbotsford
- Whalley

The Province will be working with Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal Health and Northern Health authorities to increase appointments in these high-transmission neighbourhoods, primarily using AstraZeneca.

Anyone born in 1981 and earlier (40+) can access the AstraZeneca COVISHIELD vaccine at eligible pharmacies with vaccine supply throughout B.C. People can find an eligible pharmacy here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/pharmacy#find>

People living in high-transmission communities must register for their vaccine appointments using the Province's Get Vaccinated registration and booking tool and will be invited to book an appointment on the same day they register. The fastest way to register and book is online at gov.bc.ca/getvaccinated.

High-transmission communities have been prioritized based on COVID-19 cases, outbreaks and hospitalizations.

Learn More:

To learn more about B.C.'s high-transmission neighbourhood vaccine plan, see: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/neighbourhood>

To learn more about the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine, please visit: www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/monitoring-vaccine-uptake-safety-and-effectiveness/#55plus

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

[Paid leave for workers to get COVID-19 vaccine](#)

The B.C. government has introduced amendments to the Employment Standards Act that, if passed, will provide workers with up to three hours of paid leave to get each dose of their COVID-19 vaccine.

These amendments expand on the regulatory changes made on April 1, 2021, that currently provide job-protected leave for workers to take as much time as they need to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The changes to the act will allow employees to take up to three hours of paid leave to get their COVID-19 vaccine, for each dose.

The Ministry of Labour consulted with the business community, labour organizations, Indigenous partners and other stakeholders in developing this legislation to balance paid leave with supports for employers. Businesses suffering from the economic impact of COVID-19 can access direct financial support through the Circuit Breaker Business Relief Grant and the Small and Medium Sized Business Recovery Grant program.

If passed, the effective date will be retroactive to the date of introduction (April 19, 2021).

Learn More:

For more information on B.C.'s employment standards, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards>

[Province, business groups to strengthen B.C. supply chains](#)

Twenty-four projects from across B.C. designed to strengthen manufacturing supply chains have received StrongerBC funding to help make the province more secure in the face of global supply interruptions.

The Supply Chain Resiliency Grant Program has awarded one-time funding of up to \$400,000 to organizations with wide-ranging projects that focus on various aspects of strengthening B.C.'s manufacturing ecosystem.

After the initial application intake period, the B.C. government increased its original \$4-million investment to \$6 million to allow more business groups to benefit from receiving a grant.

The program was open to industry and trade associations, and groups of organizations collaborating on a manufacturing project. The program is part of StrongerBC: BC's Economic Recovery Plan.

Quick Facts:

- The Supply Chain Resiliency Grant Program is part of the \$16.25-million B.C. Supply Chain Resiliency and Value-Added Manufacturing project.
- The project includes the \$10-million Accelerating Manufacturing Scale-Up Grants program, which provides cost-shared funding of up to \$250,000 to eligible individual businesses or up to \$500,000 to eligible groups of businesses working together on a project.
- There are more than 11,000 small- and medium-sized manufacturing companies in B.C., contributing \$17 billion to the economy each year.

Learn More:

For more information on the Accelerating Manufacturing Scale-Up Grants, visit: <https://bcmanufacturinggrant.ca/>

For more information on StrongerBC, visit: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/>

[Fast track to infrastructure construction trades in Vancouver](#)

Up to 30 eligible British Columbians, over two intakes, will get skills training to prepare them for jobs as construction craft workers and labourers in the Lower Mainland.

This is a new Community and Employer Partnerships (CEP) project from the Government of British Columbia. The priority for recruitment is intended for immigrants, youth, women and individuals laid off as a result of COVID-19.

During the project, participants will receive seven weeks of occupational, employability and life-skills training, four weeks of on-the-job work experience and one week of follow-up support to assist in their job search. Participants will also receive workplace safety certification specific to infrastructure construction, including Occupational First Aid Level 1, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, fall protection, excavation, trenching and shoring safety, ladder safety, personal protective equipment and confined spaces.

Funding for this project is provided through the Project Based Labour Market Training stream of WorkBC's CEP, which invests \$15 million annually in communities throughout B.C.

Full-time, group-based classroom learning for the first intake of this project starts on Monday, April 26, 2021. Project activities run through to July 16, 2021. The second intake is scheduled to start July 9, 2021, and run until Oct. 8, 2021.

[Budget 2021 low-wage workers](#)

Establishing a \$15 Federal Minimum Wage

The Government of Canada is announcing its intention to introduce legislation that will establish a federal minimum wage of \$15 per hour, rising with inflation, with provisions to ensure that where provincial or territorial minimum wages are higher, that wage will prevail. This will directly benefit over 26,000 workers who currently make less than \$15 per hour in the federally regulated private sector.

Enhancing the Canada Workers Benefit

Budget 2021 proposes to expand the Canada Workers Benefit to support about 1 million additional Canadians in low-wage jobs. The government would raise the income level at which the benefit starts being reduced to \$22,944 for single individuals without children and to \$26,177 for families. In addition, Budget 2021 proposes to allow secondary earners in couples to exclude up to \$14,000 of their working income when income-testing the Canada Workers Benefit.

Extending the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy Until September 2021

The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy is currently set to expire in June 2021. Budget 2021 proposes to extend the wage subsidy until September 25, 2021. It also proposes to gradually decrease the subsidy rate, beginning July 4, 2021, in order to ensure an orderly phase-out of the program as vaccinations are completed and the economy reopens.

Providing Additional Weeks of Recovery Benefits and EI Regular Benefits

The government proposes to provide up to 12 additional weeks of Canada Recovery Benefit to a maximum of 50 weeks. The first four of these additional 12 weeks will be paid at \$500 per week. As the economy reopens over the coming months, the government intends that the remaining 8 weeks of this extension will be paid at a lower amount of \$300 per week claimed.

Budget 2021 also proposes to extend the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit an additional 4 weeks, to a maximum of 42 weeks, at \$500 per week, in the event that caregiving options, particularly for those supporting children, are not sufficiently available in the interim as the economy begins to safely reopen.

In addition, Budget 2021 proposes legislative amendments to provide authority for additional potential extensions of the Canada Recovery Benefit and its associated suite of sickness and caregiving benefits, as well as regular EI benefits until no later than November 20, 2021, should they be needed.

Budget 2021 support for small business

Extending the Canada Emergency Business Account

The Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) has provided interest-free, partially forgivable loans to over 850,000 Canadian small businesses. In December 2020, the government increased the value of the loan from \$40,000 to \$60,000 to help small businesses bridge to recovery. If a business repays their loans by December 31, 2022, up to a third of the value of their loans (meaning up to \$20,000) will be forgiven. In further recognition of the ongoing pandemic, the government recently extended the application deadline for CEBA to June 30, 2021.

A small number of businesses have faced challenges accessing the program, including Indigenous and rural businesses. To make sure these businesses are not left behind, the government provides similar support through the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund and Indigenous Business Initiative. To make sure these businesses can continue to access support:

- Budget 2021 proposes to extend the application deadline for similar support under the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund and the Indigenous Business Initiative until June 30, 2021.
- Budget 2021 proposes to provide up to \$80 million in 2021-22, on a cash basis, for the Community Futures Network of Canada and regional development agencies, and to shift remaining funds under the Indigenous Business Initiative into 2021-22, to support an extended application deadline for the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund and Indigenous Business Initiative until June 30, 2021. This would support small businesses in rural communities so they can continue to serve local populations.

Helping Hard-hit Businesses Hire More Workers

Budget 2021 proposes to introduce the new Canada Recovery Hiring Program for eligible employers that continue to experience qualifying declines in revenues relative to before the pandemic. The proposed subsidy would offset a portion of the extra costs employers take on as they reopen, either by increasing wages or hours worked, or hiring more staff. This support would only be available for active employees and will be available from June 6 to November 20, 2021. Eligible employers would claim the higher of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy or the new proposed subsidy. The aim is to help businesses to hire new workers as the economy reopens.

Enhancing the Canada Small Business Financing Program

Budget 2021 proposes to improve the Canada Small Business Financing Program through amendments to the Canada Small Business Financing Act and its regulations. These proposed amendments are projected to increase annual financing by \$560 million, supporting approximately 2,900 additional small businesses. Proposed amendments include:

- Expanding loan class eligibility to include lending against intellectual property and start-up assets and expenses.
- Increasing the maximum loan amount from \$350,000 to \$500,000 and extending the loan coverage period from 10 to 15 years for equipment and leasehold improvements.
- Expanding borrower eligibility to include non-profit and charitable social enterprises.
- Introducing a new line of credit product to help with liquidity and cover short-term working capital needs.

Stay safe.

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