

Joleen Kaminski

From: CLRInfo
Sent: February 12, 2021 6:53 AM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Paul Strangway; Joleen Kaminski
Subject: COVID 19 Update - February 12

Importance: High

[CLR Members,](#)

This week's COVID-19 news and updates for you:

[Concern around upcoming holidays and events](#)

With the long weekend coming up, health officials have been stressing the importance of safe behaviour so that B.C. has a hope of relaxing restrictions at the end of the month.

The B.C. Centre for Disease Control released tips for celebrating Lunar New Year on Friday and Family Day on Monday.

On Feb. 5, DR. Bonnie Henry extended her public health order banning events and gathering of any size indefinitely, but said the rules could be eased if case numbers continue to fall in the coming weeks.

For now, those numbers appear to have plateaued again. B.C. has recorded an average of 437 cases per day over the last week, which is approximately the same average recorded at the beginning of the month.

The province's case numbers were on a steep decline in December, but surged following the holiday break.

In the Okanagan, police have also expressed concerns about a planned "mega-rally" for COVID-19 deniers that's scheduled for Saturday in Kelowna. Authorities are concerned that people will be travelling into the community to take part.

[Third variant detected in Canada](#)

The extra-contagious variants that emerged in the U.K. and South Africa have been found in seven provinces now, and Ontario recently logged the country's first case of the variant that was first detected in Brazil, known as the P.1 variant.

Over the weekend, it was detected in Toronto, making the city perhaps the first in the world to identify cases of all three current variants of concern. The patient had travelled to Canada from Brazil, and is now hospitalized.

Health experts are concerned that these variants could spread faster due to their increased transmissibility, potentially leading to a surge in cases.

[Vaccination program slows down significantly](#)

The provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, said there were 1,089 immunizations on Feb. 8, for a grand total of 155,585 (including 12,802 second doses) since the program began in December. Canadian provinces are getting little to no Pfizer or Moderna vaccines this week, meaning the immunization operation has been scaled way back with a focus on delivering second doses within 40 days.

The province is still in its first phase of its vaccination program – aimed at B.C.'s high risk population – and during its peak there were over 6,000 shots being administered daily.

That number is expected to surge next month when the province's mass vaccination program rolls out and Pfizer delivers the orders that it has reduced or postponed in the past two weeks.

As of Wednesday, there are now 4,305 active cases of COVID-19 in B.C., of which 230 are being treated in hospital (the lowest number since Nov. 20), with 66 of those in intensive care. There have been 71,856 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in B.C. to date, including 1,269 people who have died.

Over 6,800 people are in self quarantine after being exposed to the virus.

[B.C. has no plans to move spring break, asks out of province visitors to stay away](#)

This week's COVID-19 news and updates for you:

The B.C. government has been exploring options on how to restrict travel into the province for spring break, but has not imposed any additional rules for inter-provincial travel so far. The federal government has imposed stricter travel rules for anyone arriving in Canada from outside the country. The border between the U.S. and Canada is currently closed for non-essential travel.

Premier John Horgan said if the COVID-19 numbers go down there is some optimism British Columbians could be encouraged to travel within the province during the break.

The province is currently looking at whether various provincial officials could be used to support federal government policies around travel. But those plans have not been implemented yet. For now, Horgan is focusing on talking to premiers across the country and encouraging them to tell people to stay where they are.

[The province to start clinical trials for previously rejected COVID-19 treatment](#)

The B.C. government is set to start clinical trials for a potential COVID-19 treatment that it had previously rejected and that has already been approved by Health Canada.

The drug, known as bamlanivimab, is made by Eli Lilly using technology from Vancouver-based biotech firm AbCellera. The company has donated \$1 million to the province to support the clinical trials. The drug was given emergency federal approval in November and is meant for COVID-19 patients who are at risk of developing severe symptoms. The B.C. government had declined to approve use of the drug, but will reconsider following the results of the local trials.

The discovered-in-B.C. therapy provides the body with antibodies that block the virus that causes COVID-19. Data from clinical trials of more than 4,000 patients show that bamlanivimab reduces hospitalizations by 70 per cent in high-risk patients recently diagnosed with mild to moderate COVID-19. The drug has already been used by more 125,000 patients in the U.S.

Dr. Bonnie Henry said there are still some questions around the effectiveness of bamlanivimab. "Those clinical trials have shown that there's still more understanding needed of who exactly this drug works best in," Henry said.

Stay safe.

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