

## Joleen Kaminski

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**From:** CLRInfo  
**Sent:** February 5, 2021 12:38 PM  
**To:** Ken McCormack  
**Cc:** Paul Strangway; Joleen Kaminski  
**Subject:** COVID 19 Update: February 5, 2021

**Importance:** High

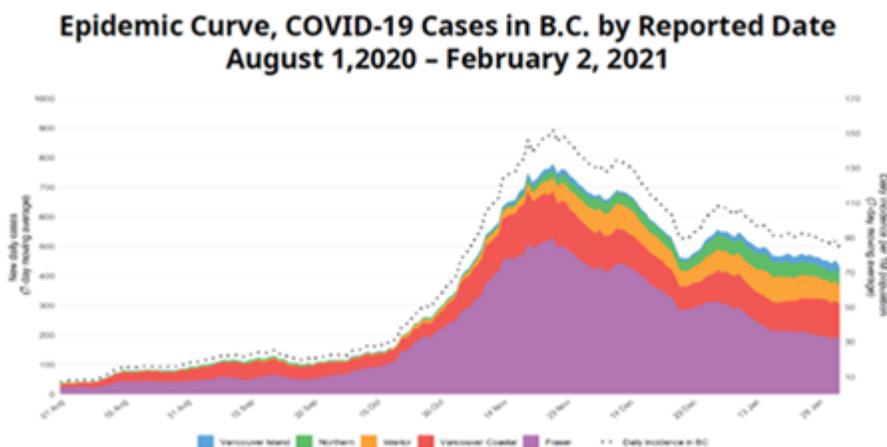
### [CLR Members,](#)

Please find your updated news and resources on the COVID-19 situation.

### [B.C. health officials reveal latest data on spread of COVID-19, restrictions and modelling](#)

B.C.'s top health officials gave a COVID-19 modelling update Friday, providing more insight into where the disease is spreading in the province, who in B.C. is being infected with the disease, what's happening with the COVID curve, as well as shared the latest information on the "variants of concern".

As health officials have said on numerous occasions over the past couple days, the COVID-19 curve in B.C. is slowly trending downwards.



However, due to concerns around the faster-spreading COVID-19 variants *the ban on social gatherings and events has been extended until further notice.*

Scientists have sequenced 4,500 cases, and of those 28 are variants of concern. The B117 variant, also known as the U.K. variant, is most prevalent followed by the B1351, or South Africa variant. Dr. Henry said the variants are "very worrisome" because they are more infectious, and could lead to rapid growth in the community.

Henry says there is concern the U.K. variant might cause more severe illness. And that some vaccines may not work on the South Africa variant. Most of the U.K. variant was detected in people who travelled, while most of the South Africa variant was acquired locally.

The pandemic restrictions were set to expire at midnight (12:01 a.m. on Feb.6). But Henry said the province needs "to protect the progress" it has made since restrictions began in November. "Right now, we need to stay the path. We need to buy time," she said.

The current restrictions do not have an end date and will allow Provincial Health Officer to either add additional restrictions or amend the existing ones.

The focus for Henry will shift to what is being described as ‘VVO’ – variants, vaccines, and outbreaks. Henry noted the hope is to ease the restrictions in late February if the vaccine program gears up and if the COVID-19 variants of concern are under control.

Currently, all events and social gatherings remain suspended. This includes activities such as indoor and outdoor events, with the exception of drive-in and drop-off events. Suspended events also include musical or theatre performances, galas, silent auctions and watching movies in theatres. Funerals, weddings and baptisms can still be held with a maximum of 10 people attending, including the officiant. Receptions are not allowed, however. Employers must make every effort to provide work from home options where possible.

### **Provincial numbers updated**

According to the latest update from the B.C. Government, Feb 4, 465 new cases were reported in the province, bringing the B.C. total to 69,245 cases.

There are 4,447 active cases of COVID-19 in the province. There are 257 individuals currently hospitalized with COVID-19, 76 of whom are in intensive care. The remaining people are recovering at home in self-isolation.

Currently, 6,943 people are under active public health monitoring as a result of identified exposure to known cases and a further 62,078 people who tested positive have recovered.

Since we last reported, we have had 98 new cases of COVID-19 in the Vancouver Coastal Health region, 234 new cases in the Fraser Health region, 27 in the Island Health region, 54 in the Interior Health region, 52 in the Northern Health region and no new cases of people who reside outside of Canada.

To date, 145,567 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in B.C., 8,097 of which are second doses. Immunization data is available on the COVID-19 dashboard at: [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca).

### **State of emergency extended to continue B.C.’s COVID-19 response**

The Province of British Columbia has formally extended the provincial state of emergency, allowing health and emergency management officials to continue to use extraordinary powers under the Emergency Program Act (EPA) to support the Province’s COVID-19 pandemic response.

The state of emergency is extended through the end of the day on Feb. 16, 2021. The extension of the provincial state of emergency is based on recommendations from B.C.’s health and emergency management officials. The original declaration was made on March 18, 2020, the day after Dr. Bonnie Henry declared a public health emergency.

On Dec. 16, 2020, the Province announced enhanced enforcement measures to keep British Columbians safe and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. This included strengthening COVID-19 fine collection measures and asking provincial enforcement officers to support police and increase enforcement by issuing violation tickets during their normal course of duties or when in public places. To learn more visit [the link](#).

### **Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination: a subject for debate**

Past practice has been that employers cannot enforce the employees to get vaccinated. As well, individuals have the right to make decisions about their health, while on the other side, employers are to ensure a safe workplace.

According to experts in occupational health and safety regulations and labour and employment law, currently there is no case law for a mandatory COVID-19 vaccine.

“It’s all speculative,” said Eric Tucker, a law professor at York University’s Osgoode Hall.

For the construction industry, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms isn't a factor because it doesn't apply to private sector employees, Tucker said. But within non-union workplaces, human rights codes could provide protection to employees who refuse a vaccine on the grounds of disability/medical reasons or religious beliefs.

In a unionized setting, if an employer adopts a policy stating that employees must get vaccinated, the union can grieve the policy, Tucker said. Management has the right to manage, subject to the collective agreement, but management rights must be exercised fairly and reasonably.

In late December, Optimity, a Canadian technology company focused on health, surveyed almost 31,000 Canadians, aged 15 and up. Almost 60 percent were concerned about long and short-term effects of a COVID-19 vaccine, while 26 per cent had no worries. Still, 63 per cent said they'd get a vaccine, 22 per cent were undecided and 11 per cent would say no. Of those declining, 41 per cent mentioned insufficient research while 18 per cent said pre-existing conditions or allergic reactions would stop them.

As well, 43 per cent of respondents believe all Canadians should have to get a shot while 29 per cent didn't think it should be mandatory.

### [International flights landing at only 4 Canadian airports as new travel restrictions take effect](#)

The next round of restrictions on international travel officially started Thursday morning as Ottawa hopes to discourage non-essential trips and slow the spread of new COVID-19 variants. Effective midnight, all international flights landing in Canada will now be funnelled to Toronto, Montreal, Calgary or Vancouver. This includes flights from the United States, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and South America, that had been exempted from the previous restriction.

Over the coming weeks, the federal government is also going to require all international travellers to pay a fee of \$2,000 to quarantine for up to three days at an approved hotel, while they await the results of their COVID-19 test.

### [Canada boosts vaccine order by accessing global pool COVAX](#)

Canada is one of the leading donors to COVAX, a new international partnership under the World Health Organization created last year to help deliver vaccine doses to poor countries that can't afford vaccinations. In return, donor countries are allowed to receive a small percentage of vaccines for their own use.

Canada's procurement minister, Anita Anand, told The Canadian Press that up to 1.9 million doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine could arrive through Gavi's COVAX Facility by the end of March and up to 3.2 million total by the end of June, pending Health Canada's approval of that vaccine.

The decision is being strongly criticized by [some anti-poverty organizations](#).

Canada contributed \$440 million to COVAX in September, half of which secured doses for Canada directly from about nine vaccines that are participating in the program, and the rest donated to supply poorer countries.

Stay safe.

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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