

From EARNSCLIFFE

B.C. COVID-19 Update – April 16, 2020

New updates:

Minister James and Minister Robinson Announcement at 9:00 AM PT ([Release here](#))

New measures announced:

- The school property tax rate for commercial properties will be reduced by an average of 25 per cent in the total property tax bill for most businesses. This is on top of the previously announced 50 per cent reduction to the provincial school property tax rate. Provincial school tax remittances delayed until the end of the year.
- Local governments can borrow, interest-free, from existing capital reserves to help pay for operating expenses.
- [BC Business COVID-19 Support Service](#) launched to serve as a single point of contact for businesses looking for information on resources available during the COVID-19 pandemic

Minister Darcy and Minister Mark Announcement at 1:00 PM PT ([Release here](#))

New measures announced:

- Minister Mark and Minister Darcy announced a \$1.5M investment per year (over three years) in *Here to Talk* – a 24/7 accessible app available to over 50,000 post-secondary students across British Columbia
- Here to Talk is a free anonymous counselling service available through the App Store and Google Play
- This app will be available everywhere in the province, for all kinds students – international, domestic, trades, adults, part-time, full-time, for both private and public institutions.
- Minister Mark’s message to students: **“you are not alone – we will need you more than ever to build the best BC and as we recover.”**

Upcoming announcements:

- Dr. Bonnie Henry and Minister Adrian Dix will present an update on modelling this Friday, April 17.

Stakeholder comments:

- Ottawa seeks ‘shovel-ready’ projects for post shutdown stimulus plan (Bill Curry, [Globe and Mail](#))
- Buoyed by positive COVID-19 news, B.C. looking at gradual route to reopening province (Justine Hunter, [Globe and Mail BC](#))
- Vancouver Aquarium says it’s facing bankruptcy due to COVID-19 pandemic (Jonathan Hayward, [Globe and Mail BC](#))
- Teck donating 1 million N95 masks in BC (Nelson Bennett, [Business in Vancouver](#))
- B.C. tourism task force asks governments for more help (Glen Korstrom, [Business in Vancouver](#))
- Maple Ridge backs call for emergency funding for TransLink (Colleen Flanagan, [Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows News](#))

Existing measures:

- The province [announced \\$5 million to expand existing mental health programs](#) to ensure British Columbians have increased access to vital mental health supports during the pandemic, with a focus on adults and youth and front-line care workers.
- BC Health Minister Adrian Dix issued a [joint statement](#) with Alberta Health Minister Tyler Shandro discouraging border crossings between the two provinces during the long weekend.
- The order is now official to make it possible for care workers to each only be able to work at one care home. The *Single Site Transition Program*, which is still underway and is described by Minister Dix as a “significant logistical challenge,” will apply to all health care workers, including community organizations and non-profits.
- Effective April 8, international travellers (including from the United States) returning to the province are required to provide a [14-day self-isolation plan](#) before or upon arrival to B.C., regardless of their point of entry to Canada. This document can be submitted online or completed in person on arrival. BC is the first jurisdiction to legally enforce this measure.
- BC Parks [announces](#) the closure of all provincial parks until further notice.
- Addressing upcoming religious celebrations (Easter, Passover, Ramadan), Dr. Henry asks people to start thinking about ways to recognize these holidays without in-person gatherings.
- Social Development and Poverty Reduction Minister Shane Simpson announced that the province is [implementing a series of temporary supports and supplements](#) for the province’s most vulnerable.
- The province’s new [Economic Recovery Task Force](#) to support the B.C. economy during and after COVID-19 kicked off its work today.
- The BC government also released [further action to support essential service providers](#) during pandemic by ensuring they cannot be held liable for damages caused by exposure to COVID-19 while continuing to operate, so long as they are complying with orders from the provincial health officer and other authorities.
- Premier John Horgan extends BC state of emergency to April 14, 2020.
- The Province announces BC Hydro’s new, [targeted bill relief](#) in response to COVID-19.
- [COVID-19 Supply Hub](#) unveiled on April 1.
- [Compliance and Enforcement Guidance about Public Health Orders with respect to Physical Distancing](#) published.
- [COVID-19 Ethical Decision-Making Framework](#) published.
- [Guidance provided to industrial camps during COVID-19](#) published.
- All episodic vending markets (i.e. farmers markets, community markets) mandated to only sell food, prohibiting the sale of all other merchandise.
- Ministerial orders [issued March 26](#) to secure supply chain; list of essential services.
- As part of the government’s \$5-billion COVID-19 Action Plan, Minister Dix and B.C. seniors advocate Isobel Mackenzie announced new funding for the United Way’s Better at Home and bc211 services to further support seniors. Full release [found here](#).
- As part of the government’s \$5-billion COVID-19 Action Plan, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Selina Robinson and Premier Horgan announced [support for renters and landlords](#) – now open for applications.

- [The Province closes certain parks, recreation areas](#), which is in addition to a previous suspension of services and facilities in provincial parks, including visitor centres, nature houses, washrooms and day-use areas. In alignment with Parks Canada, all campgrounds are closed until April 30, 2020.
- BC Legislature passed two new pieces of legislation:
 - o Bill 15, Supply Act (No. 2), which provides funding for ministry operations for the first nine months of the 2020-21 fiscal year, set to begin on April 1; and
 - o Bill 16, Employment Standards Amendment Act (No. 2), which allows workers to immediately take unpaid, job-protected leave if they are unable to work for reasons related to COVID-19.
- Minister James announces \$5-billion [BC COVID-19 Action Plan](#) to support people, essential services, businesses, and the economy
- Restaurants temporarily permitted to use unemployed servers to deliver liquor products
- BC public health order issued to close all personal service businesses
- Dine-in service prohibited at all restaurants across BC; mandating take-out and delivery only
- MSP wait times waved for those returning to BC from outside of province or outside the country who have been out longer than allowed.
- Community level initiatives in place to support women's shelters and all of our shelter systems
- The Minister of Public Services and Solicitor General declares a provincial state of emergency
- The Province declares a public health emergency under the [Emergency Health Services Act](#)
- Bars and clubs instructed to close; restaurants may remain open if they abide by crowd size rules and distancing measures
- K1-12 classes suspended until further notice
- Now available online: BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool (Available [here](#))
- B.C. health authorities move to outbreak response Phase 2, postponing all non-urgent surgeries/procedures, which will result in the cancellation of thousands of elected surgeries; staff who provide scheduled surgeries to be moved over to assist with critical care
- Lions Gate Hospital moves to Phase 3, only accepting emergency cases
- B.C. pharmacists permitted to refill prescriptions without requiring an additional physician's note
- Physicians to receive compensation for providing virtual care services
- Restricting visitors in long-term care facilities to essential visitors only
- Prohibition on gatherings larger than 50 people
- All casinos across B.C. remain closed; effective 11:59pm March 16
- Dedicated phone service for updated COVID-19 information 1-888-COVID19, info available in over 100 languages