

From EARNSCLIFFE

B.C. COVID-19 Update – April 21, 2020

New updates:

- As part of the B.C. Government's \$5-billion COVID-19 Action Plan, [up to \\$35.6M of provincial emergency COVID-19 funding will be distributed through Community Living BC \(CLBC\)](#) to ensure people with developmental disabilities stay supported and safe during the pandemic.
- On expanding restricted public areas to include beaches and parks, Dr. Henry says there will be no bans, and work is being done to close roads to create more space for people walking or biking outside.
- Regarding PPEs, Minister Dix says there is a broader acceptance of respirators now based on international standards. Says many N95 must be tested before being used. Province has received 1 million sets of gloves and 3.7 million masks to date.
- On resuming non-urgent surgery, Minister Dix says there needs to be a wait list assessment, which is currently under way.

Upcoming announcements:

- Minister Dix and Dr. Henry to announce more modelling early May.

Stakeholder comments:

- Almost half of B.C. businesses now closed not confident in ability to reopen (News Release, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade: boardoftrade.com)
- COFI's Forest Education Program Goes Virtual (News Release, BC Council of Forest Industries: cofi.org)
- BC tree planting delayed until early May due to COVID-19 precautions (M. Lamb-Yorkshi, Saanich News: saanichnews.com)
- Telus Thompson Okanagan donates \$100,000 to nonprofits to aid in COVID-19 response (No byline, BC Local News: bclocalnews.com)
- Teck Resources posts loss as miner grapples with impact of coronavirus, rail blockades (N. McGee, The Globe and Mail: theglobeandmail.com)

Existing measures:

- Premier Horgan and Minister Fraser announced [new collaborative framework](#) for healthcare in rural, remote Indigenous communities.
- Dr. Bonnie Henry and Minister Adrian Dix [presented](#) an update on modelling Friday, April 17.
- Minister James and Minister Robinson announced ([Release here](#))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.

- Minister Darcy and Minister Mark announced ([Release here](#)) 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
- 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