

**BC'S RESTART PLAN**

# **Next steps to move BC through the pandemic**

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## Message from the Premier

### COVID-19 HAS TESTED PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES

throughout BC in ways we never imagined.

Many of us know someone who has been infected by this dangerous virus, and tragically, some have lost people dear to them.

Our kids have struggled to understand why they can't see their friends or hug their grandparents. And some of our neighbours have lost their jobs or closed their shops.

I join British Columbians all around our province in thanking the essential workers who have kept our grocery stores, gas stations, and pharmacies open — and the doctors, nurses and health care workers on the frontlines of the pandemic who have put themselves in harm's way to protect the rest of us.

Your actions are making a difference. And every day British Columbians are stepping up and doing their part too.

Our combined efforts have meant BC has fared better than most. We have seen the rate of transmission decline and we are flattening the curve, but we know pandemics come in waves. COVID-19 is no different and it won't truly be behind us until a vaccine is ready.

That time could be more than a year away. But, as we look ahead to this next stage in the COVID-19 pandemic, there are reasons to be hopeful.

- British Columbians are pulling together and your government is pulling in the same direction.
- There is already strong public awareness of the risks of transmission and people remain vigilant.
- And we are in incredibly capable hands with our public service, Dr. Bonnie Henry and the team at the Ministry of Health – their mathematical modelling has held up and provides us with a path forward.



We are making headway in the struggle against COVID-19 because we're all in this together.

We can't allow division and intolerance to take the place of our unity and determination. Let's reject racism and hatred wherever we encounter it.

After Victoria Day, we will move further towards a recovery. With safe operations plans in place, more and more industries will reopen and get people back to work. And we will ease some of the restrictions in place to improve our quality of life, while reducing the risk of a spike in transmission.

This is not a return to normal. Moving too quickly could put all of our combined efforts and progress in jeopardy. But at each and every step forward, your government will be working with you to make sure the people who need support are getting it.

COVID-19 is a wakeup call for all of us. We need to be better prepared so our health care system and our economy are never again so dramatically impacted by a pandemic.

I know that together we can do this.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John J. Horgan", with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

**JOHN HORGAN**

*Premier of British Columbia*

## Message from the Provincial Health Officer

**WE HAVE UNITED IN A SINGULAR PURPOSE** – to flatten our curve. Now, we have reached an important milestone with our COVID-19 pandemic in BC: we are at the end of our beginning. COVID-19 and the risks to our province are far from gone, but we can now begin to chart our path forward.

There are still many unknowns for all of us. Like others around the world, we learn more each day to guide our decision making. What we do know is that we must continue to be cautious and thoughtful in our approach to move forward safely. Our goals are clear:

- Protect lives by suppressing transmission as low as possible for our at-risk populations;
- Ensure our health system has capacity to provide quality care to non-COVID-19 and COVID-19 patients alike;
- Alleviate the physical, social and mental health challenges that come with restricting social interaction;
- Rebuild a resilient economy and provide supports for people to safely return to work; and,
- Strengthen the social fabric of our families and communities.

It is a careful balance and one that we are working hard to achieve. And, it will require every one of us to remain committed to be successful.



Our “new normal” is based on principles that apply to every person and every situation. These principles are the foundation of how we need to move forward with our BC plan, and will remain in place for the weeks and months ahead. These principles include:

1. Staying informed, being prepared and following public health advice;
2. Practising good hygiene – hand hygiene, avoid touching your face and respiratory etiquette;
3. Staying at home and away from others if you are feeling ill – with no exceptions – whether for school, work or socializing;
4. Maintaining physical distancing outside the household, e.g., no handshakes or hugs, keeping your number of contacts low and keeping a safe distance;
5. Making necessary contacts safer with appropriate controls, e.g., using plexiglass barriers or redesigning spaces;
6. Increasing cleaning of frequently touched surfaces at home and work;
7. Considering the use of non-medical masks in situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as on transit or while shopping; and,
8. Continuing to minimize non-essential personal travel.

I have seen the strength and resilience in British Columbians that I know will hold us in good stead in the months ahead. We must continue to keep our firewall strong and remain committed to our efforts to protect our province.

Be kind, be calm, be safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Henry", written over a horizontal line.

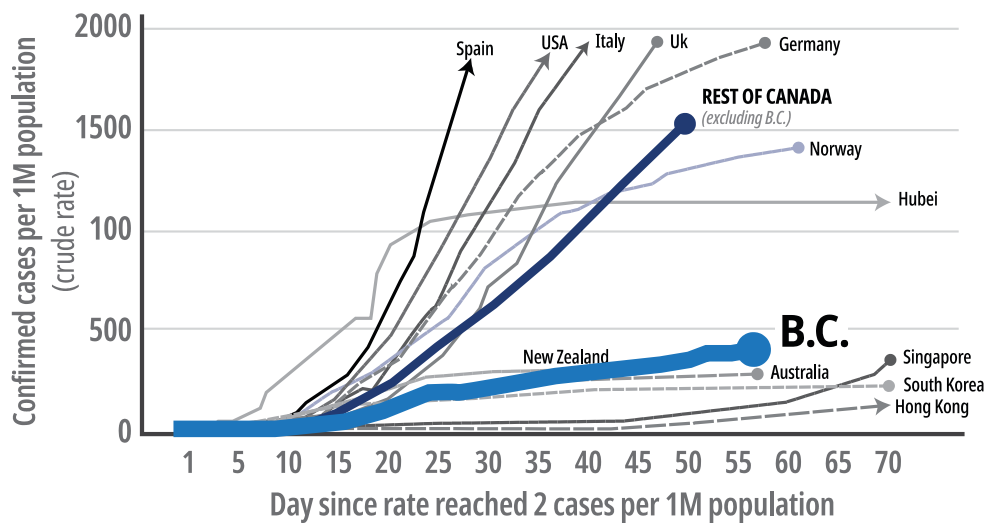
**DR. BONNIE HENRY**  
*Provincial Health Officer*

## Overview

As of May 1, 2020, more than 2,100 British Columbians have tested positive for COVID-19 and more than 100 people have died.

As the pandemic hit BC, we asked British Columbians to do their part, and they took action to stay home and help flatten the curve. With each day, the rate of growth in COVID-19 cases has steadily declined and more than 1,350 people have recovered. And we have the lowest mortality of any jurisdiction in North America or Europe with a population of more than five million.

**FIGURE 1: Cumulative diagnosed COVID-19 case rates by select countries**



From the outset, the focus of our efforts in BC have been on protecting people by slowing the rate of transmission.

BC's Restart Plan is the first in a series of steps we will take together to protect people and ensure our province can come back from COVID-19 stronger than before.

## Protective measures we've taken in BC have made a difference

Around the world, governments have taken different approaches to try to bend and flatten the curve of transmission — from complete lockdowns, to quarantines and varying intensities of physical distancing.

From the outset, BC established clear guidance, transparency and an evidence-based approach as hallmarks of our fight against COVID-19. Protective measures BC has taken have included:

- Providing physical distancing and hygiene guidelines for people, businesses and essential services to follow;
- Banning mass gathering of more than 50 people to reduce the risk of outbreaks;
- Closing bars, dine-in service at restaurants, and personal service operators, like barbers and dentists, to reduce the risk of transmission;
- Reducing in-classroom learning and child care;
- Requiring travelers to develop and stick to a 14-day isolation plan when arriving in BC from abroad;
- Restricting visitors to health care and assisted-living facilities to protect some of our most vulnerable people; and
- Postponing non-urgent and elective surgeries – while maintaining urgent and emergency procedures.

Working together we've made a lot of progress. These protective measures and restrictions have directly saved lives, but we also know that the public health benefit has come at some expense, including the economic, social and personal well-being of many British Columbians.

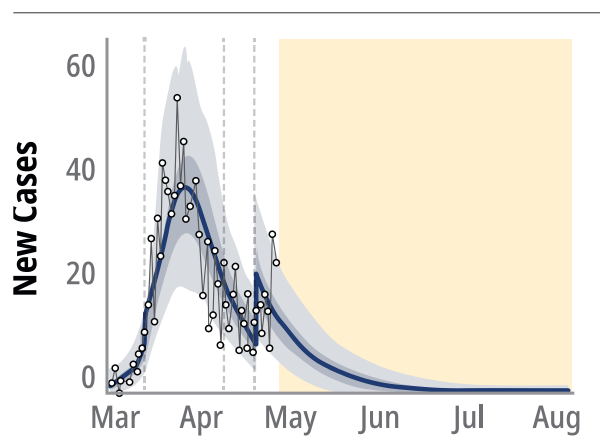
## The next stage of our challenge

BC has made extensive use of modelling and planning in our decision-making process, including the Oxford Stringency Index.

While mathematical models of pandemics are just that – models – BC's modelling has accurately predicted several key indicators in our efforts to flatten the pandemic curve, including trends in hospitalization rates, visits to ICUs and recently confirmed infections.

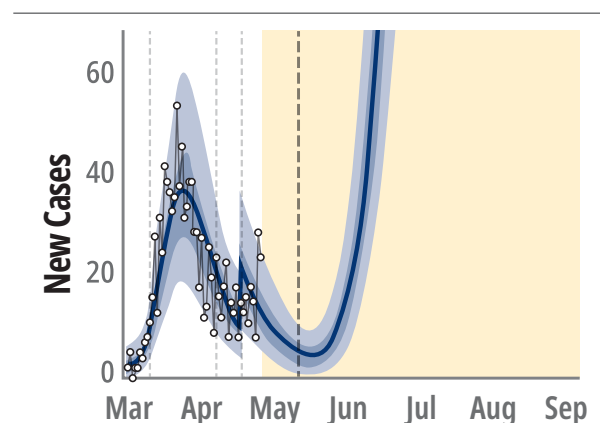
Data showing the movements of British Columbians indicates that, to do their part to flatten transmission, people in the province have reduced their social interactions and contact with others to about 30% of normal. By sticking with the existing protective measures, we can expect a further decline in the rate of new infections.

**FIGURE 2: Contacts stay at approximately 30% (70% physical distancing)**

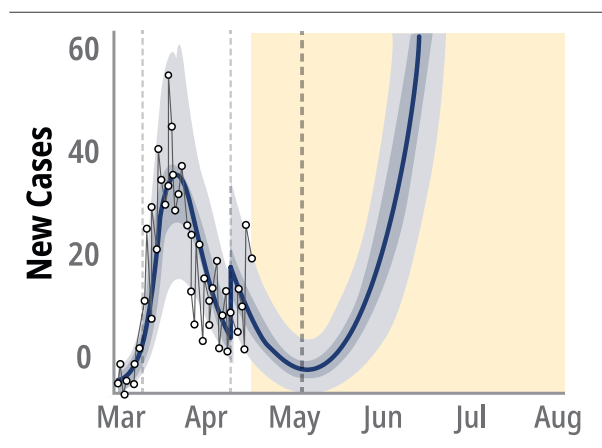


The same mathematical modelling indicates a return to pre-COVID-19 normal in our social interactions would have a disastrous effect, dramatically increasing infections, undoing our combined efforts and putting people at risk. Even at 80%, there could be a significant spike in transmissions.

**FIGURE 3: Contacts increase to 100% (return to pre-COVID-19)**

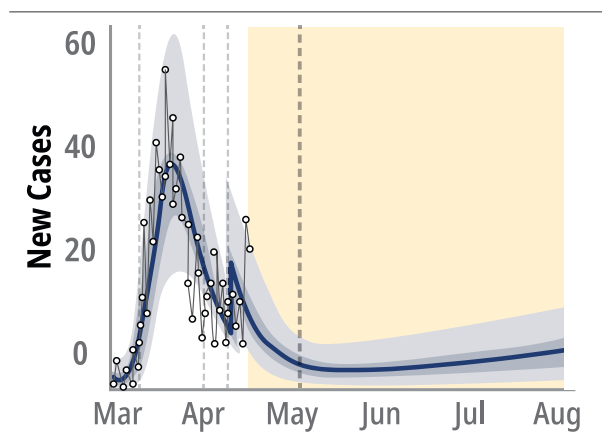


**FIGURE 4: Contacts increase to 80% (20% physical distancing)**



However, the modelling does show we can increase our rate of contact to about 60% of pre-COVID-19 normal, while maintaining a flat rate of transmission. In other words, we can double the amount of social contacts we have now and still flatten the curve.

**FIGURE 5: Contacts increase to 60% (40% physical distancing)**



Medical professionals speculate it could be 12–18 months before a vaccine is developed.

Until then, the challenge for all British Columbians will be modifying our behaviour and protective measures cautiously to allow for greater interactions without putting the health of our loved ones, friends and neighbours at risk.

## How we'll keep transmission low

### WHAT THE NEW NORMAL MEANS FOR YOU

BC's progress in the fight against COVID-19 is a direct result of the sacrifices and decisions we have all made. To continue to protect seniors and at-risk people, and ensure our health care system can respond to this dangerous virus we all have to keep doing our part – at home, in the community and at work.

- Stay at home and keep a safe distance from family when you have cold or flu symptoms, including coughing, sneezing, runny nose, sore throat and fatigue.
- No handshaking or hugs outside of your household.
- Practice good hygiene, e.g., regular hand washing, avoiding touching your face, covering coughs and sneezes, disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Keep physical distancing, as much as possible, when in the community; and where not possible, consider using a non-medical mask or face covering.

And in personal settings, when you're seeing friends and family who don't live with you:

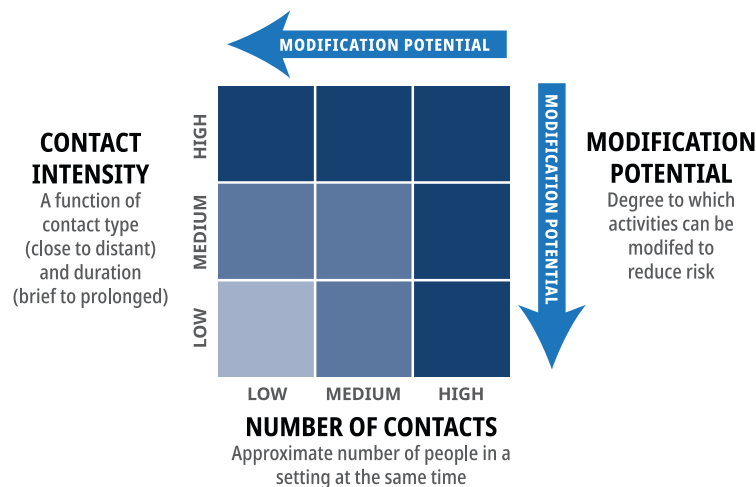
- Only get together in small groups of around 2–6 people and keep a physical distance.
- Stay home and away from others if you have cold or flu symptoms.

If you are at greater risk (over the age of 60 or with underlying medical conditions), be informed of your risk, think through your risk tolerance and take extra precautions.

### WHAT THE NEW NORMAL MEANS FOR EMPLOYERS AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The risk of transmission at busy workplaces and other institutions is a direct function of two variables: the number of contacts (the number of people present at the same time) and the contact intensity (the type of contact – i.e., close or distant, and the length of contact – i.e., brief or prolonged). These are factors we can rate as low, medium and high risks.

**FIGURE 6: Reducing transmission**



Based on these factors, steps can be taken to reduce the risk, including:

- Physical distancing measures – measures to reduce the density of people.
- Engineering controls – physical barriers (like plexiglass at checkouts), or increased ventilation.
- Administrative controls – clear rules and guidelines.
- Personal protective equipment – e.g. use of non-medical masks.

These modifications and controls, combined with the following measures, can reduce the risk of transmission.

- Create clear workplace policies that ensure people with cold or flu symptoms do not come to work.
- Implement sick day policies that allow people to be off or work safely from home when they are ill or have symptoms of a cold or flu.
- Provide work from home options, when possible, to reduce contact intensity. When it's not an option, consider measures such as staggered shifts and virtual meetings as much as possible.
- Implement strategies that reduce the number and intensity of contacts – from greater use of non-medical masks to more checkouts and increased shopping hours.
- Clean “high-touch” areas in workplaces and retail outlets frequently and provide hand sanitizer at entrances.
- Focus on higher-risk employees including those 60+ and those with underlying medical conditions – from more flexible hours, to work from home options and workspace accommodation.

Additional measures specific to various organizational settings are being developed. More will be created as various sectors are engaged and industry or sector wide norms are adopted and required.

For employers and retailers seeking detailed information, please refer to the BC COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy and Checklist, as well as resources at [WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

## How we'll start getting people back to work

Unlike many other places that imposed strict “lockdown” policies, BC’s approach was to require safe operation of a broad range of services designated as essential services, to protect our health care system and maintain access to key services and supplies. Many non-essential businesses remained open, provided they could operate safely.

### PHASE 1 (WHERE WE ARE TODAY)

#### ESSENTIAL SERVICES OPERATING DURING COVID-19

- Essential health care and health services
- Law enforcement, public safety, first responders and emergency response personnel
- Vulnerable population service providers
- Critical infrastructure
- Food and agriculture service providers
- Transportation
- Industry and manufacturing
- Sanitation
- Communications and information technology
- Financial institutions
- Non-health essential service providers

Industries that were designated as essential services developed safe operation plans, in consultation with WorkSafeBC and in compliance with the public health orders issued by the Provincial Health Officer.

As a result, BC’s economy has continued to operate in ways other provinces haven’t. But it’s undeniable that local businesses have suffered.

Many businesses closed for other reasons, including reduced demand, such as in the retail, hospitality and export industries. Others closed to do their part in helping to flatten the curve — protecting their customers and employees.

To help these businesses and other organizations get back on their feet, we need workplace practices that ensure British Columbians feel safe, whether they are returning to work or going out as a customer. That means employers will need to engage with their employees to find the right solutions and consider the concerns and needs of their customers.

## A SAFER RESTART WITH WORKSAFEBC

Like essential services during the pandemic, all employers must demonstrate they can operate safely. In fact, all employers are required under the Workers Compensation Act to ensure the safety of their employees at work.

As local businesses, non-profits and organizations plan for their restart, WorkSafeBC is here to help.

WorkSafeBC will work with industry associations to ensure the direction and guidance they provide to their members meets the requirements set out by the Provincial Health Officer.

WorkSafeBC will work with employers and workers through educational materials, consultation and workplace inspections to help them restart safely.

Employers will be required to:

- Review the new Health and Safety Guidelines, best practices and other resources at [WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).
- Adapt these materials into appropriate COVID Safe Plans for your workplace.

Sectors that have operated during the pandemic may need to update their COVID Safe Plans to fit with updated Health and Safety Guidelines, best practices and resources.

For resources, visit [WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com) or call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 888-621-7233.

## A CAREFUL RESTART

BC's restart will be a careful, step-by-step process to ensure all of our combined efforts and sacrifices are not squandered.

For the different organizational sectors to move forward, they will be asked to develop enhanced protocols aligned with the Public Health and Safety Guidelines. A cross-ministry committee of deputy ministers will monitor the process and ensure overall alignment with Public Health and Safety Guidelines and WorkSafeBC. The Provincial Health Officer will continue to provide input and advice, as needed, throughout the review process. In some instances, this will require consideration by the Provincial Health Officer of lifting or modifying existing orders before certain businesses re-open. Businesses and organizations that are not covered by a PHO order may re-open or continue to operate, but they will be expected to adopt and implement sector safety plans as they are finalized.

## PHASE 2 (MID MAY ONWARDS)

### UNDER ENHANCED PROTOCOLS

- Restoration of health services
  - » Re-scheduling elective surgery
  - » Medically related services
    - ▶ dentistry, physiotherapy, registered massage therapy, chiropractors
    - ▶ physical therapy, speech therapy, and similar services
- Retail sector
- Hair salons/ barbers/other personal service establishments
- In-person counselling
- Restaurants, cafes, pubs – with sufficient distancing measures
- Museums, art galleries, libraries
- Office-based worksites
- Recreation/sports
- Parks, beaches and outdoor spaces
- Child care

## PHASE 3 (JUNE-SEPTEMBER, IF TRANSMISSION RATE REMAINS LOW OR IN DECLINE)

### UNDER ENHANCED PROTOCOLS

- Hotels and resorts (June)
- Parks – broader reopening, including some overnight camping (June)
- Film industry – beginning with domestic productions (June/July)
- Select entertainment – movies and symphony, but not large concerts (July)
- Post-secondary education – with mix of online and in-class (September)
- K-12 education – partial return in June, full return in September

## PHASE 4 (TBD)

### CONDITIONAL ON AT LEAST ONE OF: WIDE VACCINATION; “COMMUNITY” IMMUNITY; BROAD SUCCESSFUL TREATMENTS.

- Activities requiring large gatherings, such as:
  - » conventions
  - » live audience professional sports
  - » concerts
- International tourism

The timing of a safe restart of night clubs, casinos and bars is a more complicated consideration. As with other sectors, industry associations will be expected to develop safe operations plans, for review, that are in keeping with Public Health and Safety Guidelines, as well as WorkSafeBC.

Resources to assist businesses and sectors as they restart their activities including new Health Guidelines and Checklists are available at [WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

# Some next steps to make life a little easier

## RE-OPENING OUR PARKS

Re-opening BC's iconic parks, recreation sites and trails will happen in managed stages. Our priority is providing safe access and services to people throughout the province, while maintaining the safety of park staff and park operators.

BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC will reintroduce services in keeping with direction from the Provincial Health Officer.

### PARKS REOPENING AT A GLANCE

|                                          |               |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|
| ➤ Initial park re-opening (day-use only) | <b>MAY 14</b> |
| ➤ Camping resumes                        | <b>JUNE 1</b> |

Beginning on May 14, 2020, those BC Parks, recreation sites and trails that can accommodate physical distancing will re-open for day use. This will include day-use sites and protected areas.

Parks and recreation sites that can safely provide existing service levels, such as garbage disposal and washroom facilities, will do so. These facilities will be cleaned more frequently.

Some areas and facilities remain closed, including playgrounds, picnic shelters and visitor centres. Check [BCParks.ca](http://BCParks.ca) for the most up to date information.

Camping at provincial parks and recreation sites will reopen beginning June 1, 2020 with some exceptions. [BCParks.ca](http://BCParks.ca) will carry information about the status of camping in provincial parks.

## RE-OPENING OUR SCHOOLS

As COVID-19 spread, governments everywhere took action to slow the rate of transmission, including reducing in-classroom learning.

For most British Columbians with young children, this meant having to stay at home to look after their kids. While many workplaces have made work-from-home accommodations, that hasn't been an option for everyone.

Our schools and educators rose to the challenge with online instruction and resources to keep our kids learning, but this placed a heavy burden on parents to support their kids as they learned at home.

We know there is no substitute for in-class instruction — and an important step toward our recovery is getting kids back into the classroom, so parents can get back into the workplace.

Initial health data indicates children are less affected than adults by the COVID-19 virus. Public health staff and officials will continue to review the health data. And the Ministry of Education and school divisions all around BC are reviewing options to allow for a safe return to school.

An announcement on a phased approach to resuming in-class instruction will be made in the coming weeks.

This will not be a return to normal. With weeks left in the school year, we anticipate many kids will not return to the classroom until September.

But we are also exploring ways to safely get some kids back to school before the summer, to allow more parents to return to work. How these changes unfold are the focus of intensive discussion among Ministry of Education officials, school trustees, the BC Teachers' Federation, CUPE, and other education sector partners.

For more information on protective measures that will be required of schools and post-secondary institutions, please refer to: BC COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy and Checklist.

## **RE-OPENING CHILD CARE AND SUMMER CAMPS**

Summer camps and child care services give our kids the chance to explore their interests and develop physically, mentally and emotionally. They also allow parents to continue to work knowing their children are being well taken care of.

Like all businesses, child care centres and camps will need to take additional precautions to maintain the health and safety of their employees and the children they are caring for. For many child care centres that operated as essential services during the pandemic, they have already adapted and are operating safely. But reopening more child care centres will be a key part of getting more parents back to work.

The basics will include routine daily screening of staff and kids; frequent cleaning; and ensuring staff and children who have cold or flu symptoms do not attend child care or summer camps.

But these sectors will also be required to review and work through new practices in their specific sectoral standards such as the Child Care Setting Practice Standards.

For more information on protective measures that will be required of day cares and summer camps, please refer to: BC COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy and Checklist.

## **EXPANDING PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES**

Many of us know what it means to ride on a tightly packed bus or SkyTrain. Before the pandemic, physical distancing was not always an option.

British Columbians were quick to act on direction from the Provincial Health Officer, including staying home and avoiding unnecessary trips outside the home. This made riding public transit easier for people working in essential services.

As BC begins our restart and more people gradually return to the workplace, there will be greater pressures on our public transportation networks to help people get around safely.

Ensuring operators and passengers can safely use public transit is critical. Enhanced health and safety precautions, including frequent cleaning; wearing non-medical masks for riders and staff; use of plexiglass or physical barriers where possible for drivers; and staying home when sick will be a part of the new normal for the foreseeable future.

The safe operation of public transit is a priority for all British Columbians. Over the coming weeks, we will be working with our transit agencies on more detailed plans to gradually restore service levels as restrictions begin to lift – both to help people get around and to ensure people can continue to respect physical distancing.

## How we'll keep taking care of each other

### **SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES**

When the pandemic hit, the governments of British Columbia and Canada came together to identify critical supports for people, businesses and community organizations. The urgency of COVID-19 made it critical to plan, announce and deliver on vital supports for people and businesses across our province in record time.

### **SUPPORTS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES**

- BC Emergency Benefit for Workers – a one-time, tax-free payment of \$1,000 to people whose income has been affected by COVID-19
- A COVID-19 crisis supplement for people with low-incomes, people with disabilities
- BC Hydro relief
- ICBC payment relief
- Financial support through the BC Climate Action Tax Credit
- Emergency relief for families with children with special needs
- Continued support to youth in care
- New, temporary rental supplement for renters and landlords
- Freezing all new annual rent increases
- Stopping all new and existing evictions to protect renters
- Freezing BC student loan repayments until September 2020
- Over 2,700 safe spaces for vulnerable people to self-isolate
- More spaces for people leaving violence
- Supporting seniors through funding to the United Way & bc211
- Supporting family caregivers through funding to Family Caregivers BC
- New job-protected leave through changes to the Employment Standards Act
- Child care matching for essential service workers
- Launching Keep Learning BC, so kids can continue their education online
- Emergency financial assistance for post-secondary students

## **SUPPORTS FOR BUSINESSES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INDUSTRY**

- Tax relief for commercial property owners and tenants
- Rent reduction by 75% for small businesses with federal-provincial Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (CECRA)
- Creating the COVID-19 Supply Hub to help source medical and non-medical products and services
- BC Hydro relief
- ICBC payment relief
- Launching the BC Business COVID-19 Support Service for one-on-one support

These supports have helped people stay in their homes, support their families and make ends meet. But we know that the recovery will take longer for some British Columbians than others. Working with the Government of Canada, local leaders and community organizations, we will be there to help them get through this.

## **PROTECTING PATIENTS AND OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

Over the last three years, BC implemented an ambitious strategy to increase patient access to surgeries, expand priority programs and reduce wait times.

The strategy was working, providing 35,000 more people with access to critical surgery. Hip and knee replacement wait times were reduced by 11% and dental surgery wait times were reduced by 6.8%, with plans to expand both.

COVID-19 has wiped-out that progress. In March, the Province reluctantly cancelled elective and non-urgent surgeries – while still performing more than 8,200 urgent or emergency procedures. This resulted in the cancellation of thousands of scheduled elective surgeries, which was necessary to ensure British Columbians with COVID-19 would have access to hospital beds.

Beginning on May 18, 2020, elective and non-urgent surgeries will resume.

Beyond restarting elective surgeries, we will make new investments in public health and the BCCDC to ensure BC is able to undertake timely testing, case tracking and contact tracing, while also building our hospital capacity to quickly respond to a new outbreak.

## **WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS, RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES**

We know people living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities have unique challenges in accessing the care they need. A new, collaborative framework will help ensure people living in these communities have access to the care and unique supports they need.

The framework outlines immediate actions to improve health care services, including:

- Improved medical transportation options to larger centres, including flight and ambulance;
- Housing options for people looking to self-isolate near their families, while remaining in their home communities;
- New and faster COVID-19 testing technology;
- Culturally safe contact tracing that respects privacy in small communities;
- Access to virtual doctor of the day, a program that connects First Nations members and their families in remote communities to a doctor or nurse practitioner using videoconferencing;
- Options for accommodation near larger centres with more medical services; and
- Increased mental-health supports in communities.

Local leaders will determine how these services will operate in their communities, with priority being given to ensuring residents can make informed decisions about how they receive care.

# The little things make a big difference

It will be a while before COVID-19 is behind us. Until then restrictions on large gatherings and international travel will remain. But some things will become a little easier. Over time, our parks, schools, child care facilities and camps will re-open. Neighbourhood stores and restaurants will re-open too.

Guidelines will be in place for these businesses and organizations to ensure your safety and the safety of your loved ones. We're not through this yet, but there are important things you can do to protect you and your loved ones, neighbours and colleagues. The little things make a big difference.

- Stay informed, be prepared and follow public health advice
- Practice good hygiene (frequent hand washing, avoid touching face, cough into your sleeve, disinfect frequently touched surfaces)
- Stay at home and away from others if you're feeling ill (don't go to school or work sick)
- Maintain physical distancing outside your household (no handshaking or hugging, small numbers of contacts, keep a safe distance)
- Clean your home and workspace more often
- Consider using non-medical masks when physical distancing isn't possible (on transit, shopping)

Together, we can take these actions to keep the curve flat, while doing more to improve our personal well-being, restart our economy and strengthen our connections in our communities.



Practice physical distancing



Clean your hands



Stay at home  
if you're feeling ill  
- no exceptions



Increase cleaning at  
home and at work



Stay informed



Cover your cough



Minimize  
non-essential travel



Make spaces safer



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA