Daily update – April 17, 2020

Provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry and Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, released modelling data today showing B.C. has so far succeeded in flattening the curve: we’ve reduced the number of COVID-19 cases and avoided overwhelming the health-care system.

Because of the “cautiously optimistic” forecast, Dr. Henry spoke about a gradual return to activities in the next few weeks, including within the health-care system. Some activities in schools could also resume, but no decision has been made on whether that will happen before the end of the academic year. She said that significant restrictions would still be in place for some time, likely until a vaccine has been developed for the virus. Minister Dix also said there is concern about the virus returning in the fall, and the government is ordering more ventilators and adding to its number of acute care spaces as a precautionary measure.

Dr. Henry also announced 43 new cases of COVID-19 in the province, bringing the total to date to 1,618 confirmed cases. Currently 119 people are hospitalized throughout the province as a result of the virus, with 52 patients in critical care. The statement lists 966 people as fully recovered, which is a decrease from yesterday’s numbers, and a result of new criteria in use to determine recovery. There have been 680 confirmed cases in Vancouver Coastal Health since the pandemic began. There are still 20 long-term care and assisted living residences under outbreak protocol.

VCH Medical Health Officers, our provincial partners and the Public Health Agency of Canada continue to actively monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect yourself while out in public, wash your hands frequently and maintain social distance. Anyone who has symptoms — including a fever, cough, sneezing, sore throat, or difficulty breathing — should self-isolate for 10 days, and seek medical care if symptoms do not improve 5-7 days following symptom onset.

Testing is available for the following groups if they develop a fever (over 38 degrees Celsius) and new onset (or exacerbation of chronic) cough or shortness of breath:

- Health care workers, including community pharmacists
- Residents of remote, isolated or Indigenous communities
- People living in congregate settings, such as work camps, correctional facilities, shelters, group homes, assisted living and seniors’ residences
• People who are homeless or have unstable housing

• Essential services providers, including first responders

• Returning travellers identified at a point of entry to Canada

Testing is also recommended for the following groups if they develop any respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, however mild:

• Residents and staff of long-term care facilities

• Patients requiring admission to hospital or likely to be admitted, including pregnant individuals in their third trimester, patients on hemodialysis, or cancer patients receiving radiation or chemotherapy

• Patients who are part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak as determined by the Medical Health Officer

Any physician can order a test for COVID-19 based on their clinical judgement. People who are asymptomatic should not be tested for COVID-19.

A self-assessment tool, developed with the BC Ministry of Health, will help determine whether you may need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. Find it at covid19.thrive.health, or download a self-assessment app for smartphones.

For more information and latest updates on COVID-19, follow the BC Centre for Disease Control on Twitter @CDCofBC or visit the website: http://www.bccdc.ca/