In today’s Ministry of Health briefing, provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry reported 34 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the total number of people who have tested positive in B.C. to 2,087 since the pandemic began. Of those, 811 have been in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region. The number of people in hospitals throughout B.C. sits at 89, including 35 people in critical care, and 1,305 people are considered fully recovered.

There are two additional outbreaks in long-term care, both involving a single patient, said Dr. Henry, bringing the number of active outbreaks in long-term or acute care units to 24. She also announced that four more people have died from COVID-19, including three in VCH; our condolences go to families who have lost loved ones.

Dr. Henry also updated the figures connected to the Pacific Dental Conference held in Vancouver in March that was attended by at least one person with COVID-19. She said 87 cases of the disease have been linked to that event.

She spoke once again of the need to balance controlling the virus with continuing to function as a community, and determining how to translate that into our plan for our new normal in the coming weeks and months. To help further explain those needs, Dr. Henry and Health Minister Adrian Dix will provide another presentation on modelling on Monday, May 4 to illustrate where we are in our B.C. epidemic, and where we’re headed.

Earlier today, B.C. Premier John Horgan announced the government is extending the province-wide state of emergency for a third time, until May 12. Based on recommendations from B.C.’s health and emergency management officials, the state of emergency allows the provincial government to implement measures required with access to land and human resource assets that may be necessary to prevent, respond to or alleviate the effects of an emergency. This includes securing the critical supply chains to make sure people have access to essential goods and services, and that infrastructure necessary in a response is readily available.

At today’s federal briefing, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced The Canadian Forces Snowbirds will cross the country to salute Canadians doing their part to fight the spread of COVID-19. The team’s signature nine-jet formation, with trailing white smoke, will fly over cities across the country starting in Nova Scotia this weekend and working west throughout the week. The team will release anticipated locations, routes, and times on their social media platforms each day. Flyovers will occur at an elevation no lower than 500 feet above all obstacles.
Also today, the House of Commons passed the $9-billion suite of student-focused COVID-19 supports. The Canada Emergency Student Benefit will give students $1,250 a month from May to August and $2,000 each month if the student takes care of someone else or has a disability. The government has also committed to creating an additional 76,000 jobs in sectors that need help or are on the front line; is extending scholarships, grants, and fellowships as well as doubling the Canada Student Grant program; and is launching a new Canada Student Service Grant that would see students receive up to $5,000 towards their fall tuition if they volunteer in a sector needing assistance on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anyone in the VCH region with cold, influenza or COVID-19-like symptoms, however mild, can now be assessed for and get a COVID-19 test. Testing can be done through a primary care provider, walk-in clinic, urgent and primary care centre or community collection centre. Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses including the common cold. They include: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, painful swallowing, loss of sense of smell, headache, muscle aches, fatigue or loss of appetite. COVID-19 testing is not recommended for people without symptoms.

Contact your physician or nurse practitioner's office, or a local community collection centre to arrange for a test. Phone numbers and locations of collection centre can be found by visiting: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing or by calling 8-1-1. In Vancouver, the City Centre and REACH urgent and primary care centres can provide testing as well as the St. Vincent's drive-up location at 4875 Heather Street. On the North Shore, testing is available at the North Vancouver Urgent and Primary Care Centre. If you think you need testing, please call ahead before visiting your doctor, urgent and primary care center or health clinic.

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. For more information on COVID-19, please visit www.vch.ca/COVID19.

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/.