LATEST UPDATE – Jan. 29, 2021

In an effort to keep our community partners connected, we are providing you with regular COVID-19 updates.

Ministry of Health Update

In today’s joint statement on B.C.’s COVID-19 response, Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, and Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, reported 514 new cases in the past 24 hours. The total number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in B.C. now stands at 66,779 since the start of the pandemic. Of the new cases, 134 people were in the Vancouver Coastal Health region.

Across the province, there have been 5 new COVID-19 related deaths, while 292 people are currently hospitalized, with 74 of these cases receiving treatment in ICU/critical care. The total number of individuals who have passed away due to COVID-19 is 1,189. There are now 4,557 active cases of COVID-19 across B.C. currently.

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

Since the start of immunizations, 124,979 vaccinations have been delivered in B.C. (not including today), with 4,262 of those being a second dose. All long-term care residents and staff across the province have now been offered the vaccine. More information and immunization data is available through this page: BCCDC

Dr. Bonnie Henry said vaccine supply is proving to be a challenge. Pfizer is offering reduced numbers of doses for the next two weeks. Today, B.C. learned the Moderna vaccine supply will also be reduced by 20 percent for the next two weeks, due to issues at its processing plant.

Dr. Henry said Pfizer and Moderna have offered reassurance that the delayed vaccinations will be made up by the end of the March. She said starting next week, we will be getting back on track. But it will be slower than we had hoped. The province is still hoping to stay on schedule for Phase 1 and 2 of the immunization plan, even with the announced shortages from Moderna and Pfizer.

COVID-19 Variants

There are now a number of variants of COVID-19 circulating worldwide and we have seen seven cases of the UK variant in B.C. and four cases of the South African variant. Contact tracing is working to track the origins of the cases where it is not apparent. So far there has not been wide-spread transmission of the variants, but we must be vigilant.

COVID-19 Update for Whistler

All Whistler residents and potential visitors are encouraged to maintain their efforts to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 as there is an increase in the number of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. More information can be found here.

From Jan. 1 to Jan. 26, VCH recorded 288 cases in Whistler. The majority of these cases involve young people in their 20s and 30s who live, work and socialize together. None of the cases have resulted in hospitalization or death. Whistler experienced a similar increase in cases in November 2020, which resolved in early December.

Over the past week, VCH has also issued six public exposure notifications for businesses in Whistler. Based on available information, these public exposures are believed to be low risk and VCH asks that anyone who has been to any of these locations, on the specified dates and times, to self-monitor for symptoms.

VCH urges Whistler residents and potential visitors to continue to follow Public Health guidance, including:

- Keep to your household bubbles and avoid social gatherings.
- Avoid all non-essential travel; visit your local mountains for winter and recreational activities.
- Stay home if you have any symptoms and get tested if your symptoms are consistent with COVID-19.
- Practice physical distancing and wear a mask, if possible, if you cannot.
- Wash your hands often.

International Travel

The Federal Government has announced new international travel restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Starting Sunday, non-essential trips to sun destinations – Mexico and the Caribbean – will be cancelled until
April 30th. Also starting next week, all international passenger flights must land at one of the four following airports: Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said as soon as possible in the coming weeks, there will be mandatory PCR testing at the airports for people returning to Canada. Travelers will then have to wait for up to three days – at their own expense – at an approved hotel for their test results. Travelers with negative test results will have to quarantine at home for 14 days under increased surveillance and enforcement. Those with positive test results will be transferred to designated quarantine facilities.

B.C. Premier John Horgan welcomed the new international travel measures announced by the federal government today. He said these steps will strengthen the health and safety screenings at our borders and help keep British Columbians and all Canadians safer. The advice on non-essential travel remains the same: if you don’t need to travel, don’t.

VCH Website and Translation Engagement
Many thanks to everyone who has been involved in our two important projects – the redesign of the VCH website and review of VCH translation practices. Your input in the web design project and translation needs at VCH for safe care will help us improve our translation tools and ensure our future website is a user-friendly resource that is easy to navigate. We have launched a survey for the two projects, and would like to receive input from the diverse communities we serve. Please, feel free to distribute widely. The survey is also available in Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Punjabi and Farsi. To complete the survey, go to: https://survey.givingopinions.ca/vch

Testing
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. 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 centres can be found by visiting: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing or by calling 8-1-1. 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/.

Other Resources
To find the Provincial Health Officer’s orders, visit:

To see a map of COVID-19 cases by local health area, visit: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data

For a listing of the community exposure events, go to: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/public-exposures

For the latest medical updates, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing, visit: http://www.bccdc.ca/

For community engagement opportunities at VCH, see: http://cean.vch.ca/members/current-opportunities/