

## Daily update – March 18, 2020

Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced 45 new cases of COVID-19 in B.C. today, bringing the total number of confirmed cases in the province to 231. The vast majority of them are recovering in isolation at home. Currently, there are 13 people hospitalized in B.C., with seven of them in intensive care. Five cases have fully recovered and there are many more with mild symptoms who haven't yet met the criteria to be assessed as "fully recovered."

In Vancouver Coastal Health, the total number of confirmed cases is now 144, including a newly diagnosed resident of the Haro Park Centre. The resident is in isolation and receiving care, and outbreak control measures have been put in place at the residence, which provides independent housing, assisted living and long-term care. Vancouver Coastal Health's Communicable Disease Control team is working with the staff at Haro Park Centre to identify anyone who may have been exposed and is taking steps to protect the health of all residents and staff.

Both British Columbia and the City of Vancouver officially declared a state of emergency today. Provincially, it will allow for the preservation of supply chains delivering groceries and other essential items; locally, it will allow the city to close restaurants and cafes, except for take-out or delivery, and to ration supplies at grocery stores and pharmacies if necessary.

This morning, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada and the United States have agreed to restrict non-essential travel across the border for recreational and tourism purposes. He also announced an \$82-billion aid package to help Canadians and businesses cope with the pandemic, including income supports, wage subsidies and tax deferrals. The emergency aid plan includes:

- A temporary boost to Canada Child Benefit payments, delivering about \$2 billion in extra support.
- A new Emergency Care Benefit of up to \$900 bi-weekly, up to 15 weeks, to provide income support to workers, including the self-employed, who have to stay home and don't qualify for paid sick leave or employment insurance. The measure could disburse up to \$10 billion.
- A new Emergency Support Benefit to provide up to \$5 billion in support to workers who are not eligible for EI and who are facing unemployment.
- A six-month, interest-free reprieve on student loan payments.
- Doubling the homeless care program.



- Extending the tax filing deadline to June 1.
- Allowing taxpayers to defer until after Aug. 31 tax payments that are due after today and before September.
- \$305 million for a new Indigenous Community Support Fund to address immediate needs in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities.

Other measures include a GST credit for low-income Canadians, and special support for the homeless and shelters helping people escaping gender-based violence.

VCH Medical Health Officers, our provincial partners and the Public Health Agency of Canada continue to actively monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly urge anyone who has symptoms—including a fever, cough, sneezing, sore throat, or difficulty breathing—to self-isolate for 14 days. To protect yourself while out in public, wash your hands frequently and maintain social distance. Testing is available for people with respiratory symptoms who are hospitalized, or likely to be hospitalized; health-care workers; residents of long-term care facilities; or part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak. A new 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](https://covid19.thrive.health).

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

