

Daily update – March 27, 2020

A statement from the Ministry of Health announced 67 new cases of COVID-19 today, for a total of 792 cases in B.C. to date, with 391 in the Vancouver Coastal Health region. Of the total COVID-19 cases, 73 individuals are currently hospitalized, and the remaining people who have tested positive for COVID-19 are recovering at home in self-isolation. The statement also reported two more deaths, both in VCH, to bring the provincial total to 16.

Earlier today, Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s Medical Health Officer, and Health Minister Adrian Dix presented a COVID-19 modelling report in Victoria with projections for cases, as well as the preparation we're doing in the event of a worst-case scenario.

According to Dr. Henry, the BCCDC continues to track and model the global, Canadian and B.C. case rates on an ongoing basis. She said B.C.'s rate of growth is being positively impacted by the public health measures adopted over the past few weeks. Doing a case rate comparison (using the numbers of cases per million) the report indicates B.C. has dropped from a 24 per cent average daily increase in COVID-19 cases to 12 per cent, thanks to physical distancing measures and travel restrictions. Currently in British Columbia, we have approximately 130 confirmed cases per million. If we had continued on the same trajectory from before we restricted travel, closed schools and implemented social distancing, we would now have 250 cases per million. Dr. Henry said the models show a "slight chance of optimism" for how the pandemic will play out in B.C., and said it looks like B.C. may be flattening the curve. She added we need the measures to continue to stop the spread of infection.

Using northern Italy and China's Hubei province for comparison, the modelling also illustrated the acute and critical care capacity needed for worst-case scenarios, to determine whether the province has enough beds and ventilators in case it goes down a similar path. (Note: the data is for planning purposes, it is not a prediction.) The report found the 17 provincial hospitals identified as primary care centres will be prepared enough to handle that kind of outbreak. Provincial Health Minister Adrian Dix said B.C. is developing a "cascading" approach to free up additional hospital beds in case that happens. Modelling also indicates B.C. should have enough ventilators to meet demand, even if it follows Italy's extreme pattern, assuming 80 per cent of patients in intensive care units (ICU) need to use them.

There will be a COVID-19 epidemic in B.C.; Dr. Henry and Minister Dix said we're not expecting a worst-case scenario, but we do want to be prepared for anything. The entire COVID 19: Critical Care and Acute Care Hospitalization Modelling report can be viewed here: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/COVID19_Technical_Briefing_Condensed.pdf



Also today, Dr. Henry issued a new Public Health Order to close all farmers' market vendors that do not sell food.

The Ministry of Education announced new guidelines for school leaders and a new website are being introduced to support B.C.'s K-12 students while in-class education is suspended to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Yesterday, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions announced new guidance that aims to reduce the risk of transmission, through steps that prescribers, pharmacists and care teams can take to support the provision of medications — including safe prescription alternatives to the illegal drug supply — to be delivered directly to patients, along with telemedicine for clinical assessments. To read the guidance, visit: www.bccsu.ca/covid-19

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.

We strongly urge anyone who has symptoms —including a fever, cough, sneezing, sore throat, or difficulty breathing — to self-isolate for 10 days. Testing is available for people with respiratory symptoms who are hospitalized or likely to be hospitalized, including pregnant women in their third trimester; health-care workers; residents of long-term care facilities; or part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak. 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/>

