Daily Update – May 5, 2020

At today's health briefing Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer, officially declared the end of the COVID-19 outbreak at Lynn Valley Care Centre, which was Canada's first outbreak when it was reported on March 6. An outbreak is declared over by a Medical Health Officer (MHO) when there have been two incubation periods (28 days) since the last day any case in the facility was infectious, and without any new cases identified.

Residents of long-term care facilities are most at risk of severe COVID-19. Throughout the outbreak at Lynn Valley Care Centre, a Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) Medical Health Officer led the response and worked closely with facility staff to ensure appropriate precautions were in place for the safety of everyone at Lynn Valley. During the outbreak, the centre had a total of 76 confirmed COVID-19 cases among residents and staff and 20 resident deaths. We want to thank the residents, staff and families of Lynn Valley Care Centre for their patience, hard work and understanding. Our hearts go out to all of the families who had loved ones die during the outbreak. While the outbreak has been declared over, Lynn Valley will continue to have the same preventive measures in place as all long-term care facilities in B.C., including use of personal protective equipment by staff providing care, visitor restrictions and restrictions on staff working at multiple healthcare facilities as required under Public Health Orders.

Dr. Henry also reported eight new cases of COVID-19 in B.C., bringing the total number of people who have tested positive to 2,232 since the pandemic began. Of those, 849 have been in the VCH region. The number of people in hospitals throughout B.C. sits at 78, including 21 people in critical care, and 1,472 people are considered fully recovered.

In total, seventeen outbreaks have been declared over in B.C. since the pandemic started. There are two new outbreaks in VCH: one at Evergreen House, a long-term care home in North Vancouver; and another at Richmond Hospital. At United Poultry, 35 people have now tested positive. Sadly, there is one more death to report in VCH related to COVID-19. As always, our condolences go to the family and friends of those who have died.

Yesterday, Dr. Henry said the challenge is to rebuild our economy and provide supports for people so they can safely return to work, strengthen our social fabric and have connections in a safe way. She said the sweet spot will be increasing our contacts to twice as many as we have

now without allowing opportunities for exponential growth of the virus in our community. She said key principles include staying informed, practicing good hand hygiene, social distancing, and staying at home and away from others if you're feeling ill. Tomorrow, Premier John Horgan will be speaking about how government will be moving forward using these principles.

The provincial government has also announced an extension of the temporary layoff period to 16 weeks for COVID-19 related reasons. Previously under the Employment Standards Act, a temporary layoff longer than 13 weeks in any 20-week period was considered a permanent layoff with written working notice of termination and/or pay severance to qualifying employees, based on their length of service. Now, temporary layoffs relating to the COVID-19 pandemic can be extended to 16 weeks, if the employee agrees.

Earlier today, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced an investment of $240.5 million to improve access to virtual mental health supports, and expand capacity to deliver health care virtually, including projects to reach vulnerable Canadians. These supports will also help ease the burden on our health care system, as we continue to deal with COVID-19.

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 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/.