First Nations and Emergency Program Act orders for COVID-19 response

The provincial government has introduced a series of ministerial orders under the Emergency Program Act to support its ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- These orders do not override First Nations jurisdiction. Local states of emergency issued by First Nations for their communities continue to apply.
- First Nations usually declare states of emergency through band council resolutions or issuing a declaration. The Province continues to recognize First Nations' states of emergency, and to support First Nations in managing COVID-19 through agencies including Emergency Management BC and First Nations Health Authority.
- Some First Nations under their local states of emergency have issued travel restrictions related to non-essential travel into their communities, and the Province respects these emergency declarations.
- At this time, the Province is not issuing orders that affect travel into or out of First Nations communities. The Province will work to support First Nations if they seek to assert measures they deem necessary regarding travel restrictions in the coming days.
- The provincial health officer recommends against all non-essential travel at this time in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- First Nations Health Authority, Emergency Management BC and Indigenous Services Canada have been working with First Nations to secure essential supplies and equipment for managing the COVID-19 pandemic. The interests of First Nations and Indigenous communities and organizations will continue to be an essential part of the work of the new Provincial Supply Chain Coordination Unit.
- The suite of emergency orders was issued March 26, 2020, by the minister of public safety and solicitor general under the Emergency Program Act.
- In early 2019, the provincial government initiated work on modernizing this emergency management legislation. To date, there has been extensive Indigenous engagement on proposed changes, including five regional Indigenous engagement sessions with more than 80 participants from over 60 First Nations.
- Emergency Management BC is taking that feedback to further refine this work. The Province will ensure ongoing involvement of Indigenous peoples as the new legislation is developed, in keeping with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.
- Health Emergency Management BC is holding regular regional public health co-ordination calls on COVID-19 for local governments and First Nations across all regions. Contact information for regional offices can be found at:
Stay up to date on the latest COVID-19 information at: [gov.bc.ca/COVID19](https://gov.bc.ca/COVID19)

For more information on the emergency orders, visit: [https://news.gov.bc.ca/21885](https://news.gov.bc.ca/21885)

**Contact:**

Sarah Plank  
Communications Director  
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
250 208-9621

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