

Subject: COVID-19 Update – March 11, 2021

Dear Staff,

Today, March 11, 2021, has been named a [National Day of Observance](#) by our Prime Minister, to honour the lives lost to COVID-19, and also to recognize the impact this global pandemic has had on our lives. More than 2.5 million people have died globally due to COVID-19, including 22,000 in Canada, and over 500,000 deaths in the United States. We have staff members who have been directly impacted by illness as well as some who have lost friends and loved ones. My thoughts are with each and every one of you.

Throughout this past year, one of the things that I have most reflected on is how disproportionately society has been impacted by the pandemic. Social inequities and disparity have become even more clear. The wealth gap has continued to widen. 70% of the job losses were to those making under \$20 an hour. Many of those most [impacted were also women](#), and this is something that was highlighted at our recent [AWWSTTEM event for International Women's Day](#). I hope the lessons learned from this time will shape our collective actions for years to come.

This has been a long year, and there is light. A comprehensive vaccination schedule is commencing on March 15, with the majority of Canadians eligible to be vaccinated by the end of July. Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, recently stated that the three key goals throughout the pandemic have been to: 1) do all we can to prevent people from getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19; 2) to keep our health system fully functioning; and 3) to minimize the disruption to our society. These goals have guided decision-making and they have guided the BC Immunization Plan.

Vancouver Coastal Health reports that since Phase 1 of B.C.'s COVID-19 Immunization Plan began, 275,000 long-term care residents and staff, people in rural and remote Indigenous communities, as well as health-care workers that focus on COVID-19 patients have been vaccinated. Over the past several weeks, the Province has also closely monitored the effectiveness of the vaccines. Data presented from the BC Centre for Disease Control shows that the protection after a single dose is approximately 90%, including in long-term care homes. Data from around the world also shows there is an immune response benefit to extending the time between the two doses. Extending the period between doses will also allow more people to get their first dose sooner, increasing protection.

A few days ago, Dr. Bonnie Henry also announced that universities and colleges will be preparing for [a full return to campus](#) this Fall. This provides me great hope that the day is near for when staff working from home can increase their attendance in the office and that we will be able to gather in person for meetings and training opportunities. I also remain very thankful to all the staff that have continued our key operations and reported to site, each and every day, in service of our region. I look forward to the first event we all celebrate together.

While this is encouraging news, it's important we stay vigilant and committed to our practices for keeping ourselves and each other safe, by following all our protocols and safety guidelines. The next few months will be critical – with the light at the end of the tunnel, I'm asking you all to commit and continue doing all you are doing for this last push.

For all of you, please take a few moments today to reflect on what the last year has brought us – the difficult times, as well as the learnings we have each had around what is important, and what we truly need to sustain us and our loved ones.

Take care of yourselves, and each other.

Jerry

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