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Sent: April 9, 2021 11:48 AM
To: GVRDall <gvrddall@metrovanancouver.org>
Cc: Chair Dhaliwal <chair@metrovanancouver.org>; Linda Buchanan <lbuchanan@cnv.org>; 'GVRD Employees' Union Office' <gvrdeu@telus.net>; Karlene Bateman <kbateman@teamsters31.ca>
Subject: Metro Vancouver Update - April 9th, 2021

Dear Staff,

I know it feels like I just wrote, but I have a few things weighing on my mind that I wanted to share with all of you, and you see, our IT department made the mistake of giving me access/security rights to send emails to all of Metro Vancouver. They also made the mistake of not giving me clear limits about how often I can send them. So here I am again...

As Commissioner/CAO of Metro Vancouver, I'm sometimes asked, what keeps me up at night. In truth, it's a number of things (that's another Friday email in and of itself), but depending on what's happening in our organization, our region, and the world, some things keep me up more than others. As of right now, it's COVID-19.

COVID-19 and Safety Protocols

By now, most of you know that we had a record high cases of COVID-19 in BC yesterday – 1293 cases as of April 8th. Additionally, in the recent weeks, the variants of concern have grown so dramatically relative to the other COVID-19 strains that the assumption by public health going forward is that a positive COVID-19 test will be treated as one of the variants of concern. I wrote in my last email that my greatest goal for 2021 is that we get to the end of this year having kept each other and our loved ones safe. This is truly what is keeping me up at night. For most, COVID-19 is an illness that is temporary and can be overcome. However, I also know that this is tragically not guaranteed for all. I know of organizations and CAOs that have lost staff and loved ones, or seemingly have had their health permanently impacted. I can't stress enough that I don't want any of us to join this list.

In early February, I wrote to all of you advising that we had 10 employees at that time test positive for COVID-19 since the pandemic began. Now, only two months later, we have almost tripled that number, and **we have 28 total positive cases amongst our employees**. Worryingly, the dramatic increase has all been concentrated, with **12 of those positive cases from within the last two weeks**. I'm also saddened to report that we have had our first two cases of workplace transmission.

I can't stress enough how important it is that we adhere to all protocols – they are working. The public relies on us, as do our families and loved ones, so let's keep each other well and stay vigilant. Workplace transmission happens when safety protocols are not followed. We need to stay 2 metres apart, wash our hands, sanitize often, wear masks, don PPE including a respirator as required by our operations out in the field, and follow all the safety protocols which can be found [on our intranet here](#). The services we provide, and all contribute to, no matter what our role, are essential for life and vitality. We need to stay well.

I want us to get to the end of this year saying and knowing we kept each other safe; then, we can start to look forward to what's next. However, at the end of something, we're truly at the beginning of something else. There will be no full 'back to normal'. It's a new world; we are forever changed, but there are positive aspects to come out of this too. There were considerable challenges during this time

and also some key learnings that we are able to move forward with. We get to take the best out of what we've learned during this time and move it forward into what we create, together.

Vaccinations

Attached to this email you will find some current updates from our Ministry of Health on COVID-19 and the vaccination program. **I'd like to encourage all eligible staff to get vaccinated as quickly as possible.** Those 55 to 65 and those with medical conditions are now eligible, and almost all British Columbians over the age of 18 [can pre-register](#) for when they are eligible. My wife and I got our vaccinations this past Wednesday. (Side note - now you can all guess what age bracket I fall into and how young and spritely I am!) A tip I learned was to go to smaller pharmacies either in-person or call prior, daily. The smaller pharmacies don't seem to get much warning before they get a delivery. If you are checking daily, you may be able to get an appointment.

A few days I go, I was on a call with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and our Deputy Provincial Health Officer. I urged them to include Local Government staff as part of the Priority Front Line Worker vaccine roll out, as we provide essential services to the public and are seeing increased cases in our workforce. Until we are all vaccinated, please, let's continue to stay vigilant.

I know we're all in different situations, but we are one organization, one region, and we are going to continue to get through this together. It's been a marathon, and I know we're getting weary. I had a meeting a couple weeks ago with over a hundred staff (via Zoom, of course), and I saw dozens and dozens of tired faces looking back at me. You have all gone above and beyond, and it's been over 12 months of adjusting operations, maintaining heightened vigilance and adapting processes. Please know, the good news is that we are in the final stretch of this marathon. I know that together we can make it across the finish line.

Something I read a few days ago that resonated with me: *"Hope is a renewable option: If you run out of it at the end of the day, you get to start over in the morning."*

Together we make our region strong.

Stay well, be well, and take care of one another.

Jerry

Jerry W. Dobrovolsky, P.Eng., MBA
Commissioner/Chief Administrative Officer



Ministry of Health COVID-19 update – As of April 7th 2021

At April 6th's joint statement on B.C.'s COVID-19 response, Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, and Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, reported 1,068 new cases of COVID-19. The total number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in B.C. now stands at 105,988 since the start of the pandemic. There are 8,671 active cases of COVID-19 across B.C. currently.

There have been 207 new confirmed COVID-19 cases that are variants of concern in our province, for a total of 3,766 cases. Of those cases, only 266 are active, or three per cent of the total active cases. Dr. Henry notes the B117, or U.K. variant, is dominating the variants of concern cases in B.C. with 2,838 people identified carrying the strain.

A high percentage of the P1, or Brazil strain, identified in the province, is associated with Whistler or travel to Whistler, but is still a small percentage of all of the cases in the resort community, and a small percentage of the cases in Canada. Dr. Henry explains there was one contained cluster in February in Vancouver, with several different introductions in Vancouver and in Whistler, probably by mid to late February. It is likely, through contact tracing, that visitors from other parts of Canada initially introduced that strain before it started to circulate in Whistler between workers, visitors and to other parts of the province.

Currently, the occupied bed rate in B.C. is 89.5 per cent. Minister Dix says the number is significantly below what it would have been pre-pandemic at this time of year. That means that there are 985 vacant base beds in hospitals across B.C. There are a total of 3,416 vacant beds when factoring the number of surge beds that were added to prepare for COVID-19.

Vaccination update

Register Online for a vaccination at gov.bc.ca/getvaccinated,

Since the start of immunizations, 912,056 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca-SII COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in B.C., 87,474 of which are second doses. Since the Province began Phase 1 of B.C.'s COVID-19 Immunization Plan, hundreds of thousands of 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 – particularly the effectiveness on older populations. Data presented from the BC Centre for Disease Control shows that the protection after a single dose is approximately 90 per cent, including in long-term care homes. Data from around the world also demonstrates there is an immune response benefit to extending the time between the two doses.

Dr. Henry concluded that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and provide a very high level of real-world protection with the initial dose. With the new evidence, Dr. Henry, is extending the interval between the first and second dose of COVID-19 vaccines to four months. Extending the period between doses will also allow more people to get their first dose sooner, increasing protection. By late-July, it could mean that everyone who wants a vaccine will have their first dose.

The 'Get Vaccinated' online vaccine registration and booking system for B.C.'s age-based immunization program has launched, allowing everyone to register and then later book their vaccine appointment online, when eligible. **Register Online for a vaccination at gov.bc.ca/getvaccinated,**

Updated information on who should get a COVID-19 vaccine can be found [here](#) and there is more information about vaccine aftercare [here](#). More information and immunization data is available through this page: [BCCDC](#).

It takes about two weeks to gain protection from the COVID-19 vaccine. This means if you contracted the virus before getting the vaccine, or within the two week period following vaccination, you may still get sick from COVID-19. Public health orders, restrictions and guidelines remain in place for everyone, regardless if you have received the vaccine. After immunization, it is still important to wash your hands, adhere to physical distancing guidelines, wear a mask and stay home when sick.

It's still not known for certain how long the protection lasts from COVID-19 vaccines or how well they work in preventing asymptomatic infection or reducing transmission of the virus. This means that all current enhanced safety measures and COVID-19 protocols will stay in place until a significant percentage of the population has been vaccinated for COVID-19 or until it is deemed safe to relax those rules.