

COVID-19

News & Updates

SENT TO ALL STAFF. MEDICAL STAFF, STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS ON BEHALF OF ISLAND HEALTH PRESIDENT AND

September 10, 2021



The past 18 months have been the most challenging ever faced by our health system – and I want to extend my deep gratitude on behalf of our board and leadership team – for the exceptional care you have provided under extremely difficult circumstances. This summer was likely the busiest we have faced in Island Health, and I know our teams provided care, kindness and compassion to each other and our patients, residents and clients each and every day.

I think many of us believed immunizations would ease pressures on our hospitals and services. We know they will help ease pressure, but only if we continue to increase immunization rates. We are not there yet. Since the end of August, we have recorded 11 COVID deaths – four of them residents of Sunset Lodge LTC in Esquimalt. We've had 449 new cases of COVID in the past week alone – and we know hospitalizations lag behind a surge in cases. Heading into this weekend, our staffing levels continue to be challenged, and today we are caring for 23 COVID patients. On top of the pressures in Island Health we have a responsibility to the provincial system, and continue to support other health authorities who are in the midst of even larger surges.

We are reviewing our elective surgical slates to identify procedures that can be postponed to help relieve some of this pressure. We also know that when our hospitals are challenged – our community teams step up to speed discharges where possible providing care for patients in their homes.

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Whether you provide direct care to patients, residents or clients; whether you support our teams at the bedside or in the community; members of our immunization and public health teams and those who support them; the work you have done throughout our pandemic response has made a tremendous difference in the lives of those we serve. I want you to know your actions matter, people care for and about you, and your voice is informing the actions we continue to take to work through this most challenging time.

On Monday, the [new provincial Vaccine Card](#) will be required to access non-essential events and businesses – and we are aware of protests planned against the Provincial Health Officer order. I hope each of you know these protests are not directed at you or the care you provide. Following the backlash over misguided protests at hospitals last week – we don't anticipate any of our facilities or services to be targeted, but our Protection Services team have been working with law enforcement agencies and will be prepared to act quickly should we need to ensure safe access to our services – both for you and those we serve.

I'd also like to welcome Marko Peljihan as our new VP Pandemic Planning. It has been quite the first week for him in this role, and you will hear more from him next week about work underway to support you during this difficult phase of our pandemic response.

LONG TERM CARE UPDATE

Parts of the [Residential Care Staff COVID-19 Preventive Measures Order](#) come into effect next week. Thank you to all of our staff who have already been vaccinated. Your actions have helped ensure the safety of your colleagues and the residents of Island Health. On September 16, employees who are not yet fully vaccinated will be required to undergo rapid testing for COVID-19 on every shift worked. We will be providing further information about the location and times for testing on each shift in the coming days. A reminder to those who are not yet vaccinated – you will need to receive your first dose by Monday, September 13th to meet the October 11 deadline for a second dose. On October 12th, both doses are required or you will not be permitted to work.

Do not wait – get your vaccine as soon as possible!