

Joleen Kaminski

From: CLRInfo
Sent: June 4, 2021 8:22 AM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Maria Sushkova
Subject: COVID-19 Update - June 4

Importance: High

[CLR Members,](#)

Please find the recent updates on the COVID-19 situation.

[Statement from the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health \(CCMOH\): Interchangeability of Authorized COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has provided [updated guidance on the use of mixed vaccine schedules](#) in COVID-19 vaccination programs.

NACI recommends that:

- For individuals who received a first dose of AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine (viral vector vaccine), either AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD or an mRNA vaccine may be offered for the second dose, unless contraindicated.
- For individuals who received a first dose of an mRNA vaccine, the same mRNA vaccine should be offered for their second dose. If the same mRNA vaccine is not readily available or unknown, another mRNA vaccine can be considered interchangeable and should be offered to complete the vaccine series.

NACI's recommendations were informed by current international studies of the safety and immune response produced from mixed vaccine schedules, the rate of severe blood clots with low blood platelets, associated with the use of viral vector vaccines, as well as the current and projected supply of mRNA vaccines.

In Canada, both mRNA and viral vector vaccines are available with sufficient supply to allow choice of second dose for those who had a first dose of AstraZeneca vaccine. Some individuals who started their vaccine series with AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD may want to complete their series with this product; others may prefer to receive an mRNA vaccine for their second dose.

[Provinces working with Ottawa on plan to reopen U.S.-Canada border](#)

B.C. Premier John Horgan says premiers have been working on a plan to restart travel between the United States and Canada. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, Horgan mentioned the “casual” conversations that are taking place. The decision to reopen the border is ultimately up to the federal government but it requires collaboration with the provinces.

The border has been closed for all but essential travel since March 2020 and is closed until at least June 21.

There is growing pressure on the federal and provincial governments to create a timeline for reopening the borders. The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade (GVBOT) is calling on both levels of government to create a plan similar to B.C.'s restart plan, which would include benchmarks around COVID-19 case numbers and vaccination rates.

Horgan says Canadian provinces need to factor in immunization rates. Currently, 41.4% of the population in the U.S. is fully vaccinated and 51.3% have received at least one dose. In Canada, 5.8% are fully vaccinated but 58.5% have received at least one dose.

Health Canada has referenced vaccination of 75% of adults as a threshold for herd immunity. B.C. Health Minister Adrian Dix is looking at 85% for B.C. to feel comfortable.

[Minimum wage surpasses \\$15/hour](#)

On June 1, 2021, B.C.'s general minimum wage increased to \$15.20 an hour and the lower minimum wage for liquor servers ended.

Over the past four years, B.C.'s general minimum wage has increased from \$11.35 to \$15.20 per hour. B.C. now has a minimum wage that is the highest in the country and starting next year, the increases for minimum wage will be tied to inflation.

Learn More:

For more information, visit the Employment Standards branch website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/wages/minimum-wage>

[Grant supports inclusive employment](#)

Employers in British Columbia are receiving support to create inclusive work environments for people with disabilities through a \$4.8-million grant from the Province.

“Many people with disabilities are interested in securing a good job but have experienced additional barriers due to the pandemic,” said Nicholas Simons, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. “This new funding will support employers and businesses committed to building more inclusive and accessible workplaces in hiring staff that reflect the diversity of our province.”

Over the next two years, Small Business BC will work with the Presidents Group on the Employer Supports for Persons with Disabilities project. The goal of the project is to support employers to hire, rehire and retain people with disabilities for long-term successful employment.

Most of the funding will support small businesses in making their workplaces more accessible. Small businesses can apply for Workplace Accessibility Grants of up to \$1,000 to remove physical, communication and other barriers. These funds will also support awareness campaigns and learning and development resources offered by the Presidents Group and Small Business BC.

The Province has proclaimed May 30 to June 5, 2021, as B.C.'s fourth annual AccessAbility Week, which coincides with National AccessAbility Week and National Indigenous AccessAbility Week.

Learn More:

Learn more about British Columbia's accessibility legislation: www.gov.bc.ca/accessibility

Read more about Small Business BC on its website: <https://smallbusinessbc.ca/accessibility-resources>

More information about the Presidents Group's commitment to accessible employment can be found here:

<https://accessibleemployers.ca/>

[Government of Canada Announces Details of the New Canada Recovery Hiring Program and Extension of Business Support Programs](#)

Jun 2, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Chrystia Freeland, and the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Mary Ng, announced that the new Canada Recovery Hiring Program, would be available retroactively to June 6, 2021.

The proposed Canada Recovery Hiring Program would help hard-hit businesses hire the workers they need to recover and grow as local economies reopen. The program would provide a subsidy of up to 50% of eligible salary or wages. It would be available to eligible employers who have experienced qualifying revenue declines so they can hire more workers, increase workers' hours, or increase wages.

Like with the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy, businesses would be able to access the program through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Support would be available retroactively to this Sunday, June 6, 2021, and businesses would be able to hire workers as their local economy reopens, or as they are ready.

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Small Business also detailed the proposed extension of business support programs, such as the Wage Subsidy, Rent Subsidy, and Lockdown Support, until September 25, 2021. These programs are currently set to expire this month. Both the Hiring Program and proposed extensions are part of Bill C-30, the *Budget Implementation Act*, which is currently before Parliament.

The Hiring Program is designed to interact with the Wage Subsidy. The programs overlap so that, as Wage Subsidy rates gradually decline, eligible employers would still be able to receive the maximum support from the Hiring Program this summer if they hire more workers or increase workers' hours or wages. This will make it easy for businesses to quickly hire new workers and do so at a pace that works best for them, as different jurisdictions reopen their economies at different paces.

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Small Business also announced that the Business Credit Availability Program and Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program are being extended to December 31, 2021. Both programs were set to expire on June 30, 2021.

[Government of Canada to reimburse self-employed workers who repaid the CERB](#)

As [announced in February](#), self-employed workers who applied for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and would have qualified based on their gross income are not required to repay the benefit, provided they also met all other eligibility criteria. On May 27, the Government of Canada announced further details on how this approach will be applied.

Self-employed workers whose net self-employment income was less than \$5,000 and who applied for the CERB will not be required to repay the CERB, as long as:

- They have filed their 2019 and 2020 income tax returns by December 31, 2022;
- Their gross self-employment income was \$5,000 or more in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to their initial application; and
- They met all other CERB eligibility criteria.

The CRA will review the 2019 and 2020 income tax returns of workers in this situation to verify that these conditions are met.

Starting on May 27, 2021, self-employed workers who meet the remission order criteria and who had voluntarily repaid all or part of the CERB to the CRA or Service Canada can request a reimbursement of their payments only from the CRA. These workers can do so by completing the CRA's [CERB Reimbursement Application for Self-Employed Individuals](#) form and submitting it to the CRA electronically or by mail.

[Joint Statement by the Minister of Labour, the Federally Regulated Employers - Transportation and Communications, and the Canadian Labour Congress regarding the role that vaccination can play in workplace health and safety](#)

Jun 1, the Minister of Labour, Filomena Tassi, the Federally Regulated Employers - Transportation and Communications (FETCO) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) issued the following joint statement regarding the role that vaccination can play in workplace health and safety:

“As we continue fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the health and safety of workers in Canada remains a priority for the Government of Canada and employers. Canada has entered a very important phase of the pandemic, with safe and effective vaccines available to help prevent severe illness, hospitalizations and death from COVID-19.

Vaccination plays a critical role in the prevention of COVID-19 among workers, their families and surrounding communities. That is why the Government of Canada, FETCO, and the CLC encourage all workers in Canada to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is their turn to do so.

We also strongly encourage employers to accommodate employees who are receiving their first and/or second vaccinations, and those who may be experiencing post-vaccination symptoms...”

Read the full [Statement](#).

[Health Canada extends expiry date of two lots of the AstraZeneca vaccine by an extra month](#)

Health Canada has approved an extension to the expiry dates of two lots (MT0055 and MT0056) of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine by 30 days, from May 31, 2021, to July 1, 2021. The approval to extend the shelf life was supported by scientific evidence.

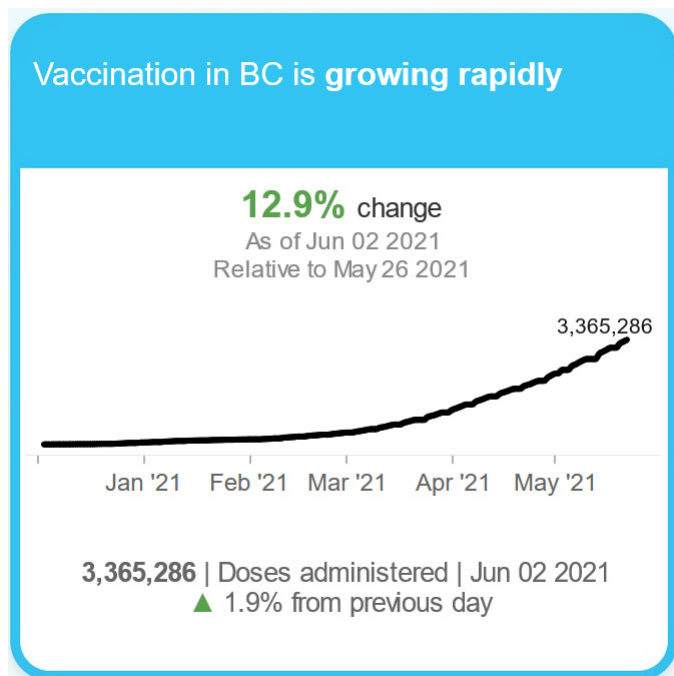
Health Canada had previously approved a shelf life of six months for AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine. On May 27, 2021, Health Canada received a submission from AstraZeneca that included product stability and mathematical modelling data that demonstrated that the quality, safety and efficacy of the two lots would be maintained for an extra month, for a total of up to seven months.

[Provincial stats](#)

The information below is current as of 2pm on Thursday, June 3, 2021:

- New cases: 199
- Total cases: 144,866
- Deaths in last 24 hours: 2
- Total deaths: 1,709
- Total recoveries: 140,537 (97%)

[Immunization dashboard](#)



Stay safe.

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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97 Sixth Street,
New Westminster, BC V3L 5H8

O 604-524-4911

F 604-524-3925 **C** 604-968-4911

E kenm@clra-bc.com **W** www.clra-bc.com

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