

A message from
Honourable
Shane Simpson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction



Social Services Sector Roundtable COVID-19 Communique May 19, 2020

ATTENDING MEMBERS:

Minister Shane Simpson (Chair)
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
BC CEO Network
BC Government and Service Employees' Union
Board Voice Society of BC
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Community Social Services Employers Association of BC
Ending Violence Association of BC
Federation of Community Social Services of BC
Provincial Association of Residential & Community Agencies
Community Living BC
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat

Messages from Minister Simpson and SSS Roundtable Members

- Minister Simpson mentioned that today is day 1 of phase 2 of the B.C.'s government restart plan. He emphasized that the plan is a framework and not meant to be prescriptive but guidelines for moving forward. He asked Roundtable members to think about sharing best practices and information and identify any systemic or structural changes needed at the Roundtable, versus operational changes as we move forward.

Pandemic Pay

- On May 19, Finance Minister Carole James announced [pandemic pay for front line health and social service workers](#).
- Christina Zacharuk from PSEC spoke to this announcement.
 - Under a cost-sharing agreement with the federal government, the Province will be providing top-up pay to frontline workers during the pandemic. It will be paid in a lump-sum payment.
 - PSEC will be having conversations with CLBC, MCFD and SDPR about how to best provide the money and to get the money flowing as quickly as possible. The payment is for union and non-union equivalent staff. It does not apply to management staff.
 - More information is available online at www.gov.bc.ca/pandemicpay However, the lists of occupations and workplaces on the website are not exhaustive.
- CSSEA shared information with its members after the announcement went out. Other Roundtable members can tell their associations that information will be sent out from the funding ministries and agencies shortly.
- Follow-up questions or concerns about pandemic pay should be forwarded PSEC@gov.bc.ca or through CSSEA.
- PSEC will provide another update at the next Roundtable meeting to address any outstanding concerns.

Non-Profit Survey Report

- There was a brief discussion about the [non-profit survey report](#) which details the impact of COVID-19 on the non-profit sector.
- Members agreed that the report accurately captured many of the issues facing the social services sector.
- Rick FitzZaland of the Federation noted that the report underlined the need to restart the work of the two Roundtable working groups that were established before the COVID-19 pandemic to progress work on procurement and the sector Human Resources strategy. This was supported by members.

Draft Social Sector Recovery Plan

- Roundtable members indicated that the draft Sector Recovery Plan provides a good overview of the sector but felt there are still some issues to be addressed.

- It was noted that the Plan is intended as high-level guidance that agencies can follow as they develop their own sub-sector and operational plans.
- Members expressed concerns that agencies were facing financial pressures due to unanticipated extra expenses during the pandemic and identified the need for a clear financial plan for recovery.
- There was recognition that sick pay needed to be addressed. (**UPDATE:** In his weekly media briefing on May 20, Premier Horgan said he had raised this issue with the federal government, since he believes it should be addressed nationally, but he was prepared for B.C. to develop its own sick pay program if needed).
- Gentil Mateus from CSSEA suggested that the recently established joint Occupational Health and Safety Council would be a good venue to address sector concerns related to Provincial Health Officer orders and guidance and WorkSafeBC guidance.
- Dr. Behn Smith confirmed, that given the diversity of the sector, she will continue to engage with the Roundtable to help address any gaps in public health guidance identified by the sector.

Future meetings:

- Future meetings will now start to focus on the work the Roundtable was doing prior to COVID-19, as well as COVID-19 recovery planning.

Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Update

- Dr. Behn Smith reiterated that, in terms of epidemiology, children are at lower risk of COVID-19 and that with upcoming school re-opening, it was voluntary for children to return to some class.
- [WorkSafeBC sector guidelines](#) were issued on May 15.
- The [updated family and visitor policy](#) with clearer and stronger language that addresses concerns expressed by people with disabilities and their families and caregivers was released May 19.

Key Information

NEW! Canada's Public Health Officer is now recommending the use of non-medical masks when physical distancing recommendations cannot be met:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

NEW! [WorkSafeBC: selecting and using masks](#) released May 15.

NEW! The [updated family and visitor policy](#) with clearer and stronger language that addresses concerns expressed by people with disabilities and their families and caregivers was released May 19.

NEW! Report: No immunity: BC Non-profits and the impact of COVID-19:
<https://www.thevantagepoint.ca/sites/default/files/no-immunity-report-hi-res.pdf>

NEW! Infographic: No immunity: BC Non-profits and the impact of COVID-19:
https://www.thevantagepoint.ca/sites/default/files/no-immunity-infographic-screen_version.pdf

[WorkSafeBC released sector-specific guidance](#) with regard to re-opening on May 15.

Link to May 4th presentation, COVID-19: Going Forward
https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Covid-19_May4_PPP.pdf

Link to testing guidelines: http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Statistics%20and%20Research/Statistics%20and%20Reports/Epid/Influenza%20and%20Respiratory/ERV/BCCDC_PHL_Updated_nCoV_Lab_Guidance.pdf

Interim Guidance to Social Services: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-social-service-providers.pdf>

The B.C. government website contains links to important health information as well as non-health-related information: www.gov.bc.ca/covid-19