



January 18, 2021, CLBC Teleconference for Individuals and Families Plain Language Summary

Who were the speakers on this call?

- Michael Prince, CLBC Board Chair
- Dr. Daniele Behn Smith, Deputy Provincial Health Officer
- Ross Chilton, CLBC CEO
- Honourable Minister Nicholas Simons, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Opening remarks from Minister Simons:

- I am excited to be the new Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.
- I want to make sure government policies are meeting the needs of people in BC.
- I used to be the opposition critic for CLBC and met a lot of people during that time that will help me understand my new responsibility.
- I am happy to continue the important work of the Reimagining Community Inclusion Initiative.
- I am happy about the recent funding announced to help people with disabilities get back to work. You can read the announcement [here](#).
- I want to hear the voices of community members. Ideas are always welcome.

Opening remarks from Ross Chilton:

- This call is a good way for us to stay in touch with what is important to individuals and families.
- CLBC is grateful to have timely health information from Dr. Behn Smith and the Provincial Health Office.

- CLBC knows many people are anxious to know when you and/or your family member will get access to the vaccine.
- CLBC recognizes everything individuals and families are doing to stay safe and strong during COVID.

Opening remarks *about vaccines* from Dr. Behn Smith:

- Right now, there are two approved vaccines for use in B.C.
- One is called Pfizer and one is called Moderna.
- Five other vaccines have been ordered and will be coming in the spring.
- New vaccines are being approved quickly.
- People making the vaccines are still following all of the steps to make sure the vaccines are safe.
- These vaccines have the same kind side effects as other vaccines. For example- soreness or redness on the arm where the needle went in.
- There have been very few anaphylactic or life-threatening reactions. If this happens, the health professionals giving the vaccine are ready to respond very quickly.
- There is a Vaccine Planning Group, led by Dr. Henry, who is figuring out how and when vaccines will get to everyone in BC.
- Details of the immunization were announced on Friday, January 22 and can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/vaccines#phases>]

Question- *When can we all get the vaccine? What is the timeline for people living in group homes, home share, private home and the staff serving those people?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith

- Individuals and staff of group homes will have access to the vaccine in February and March (quarter 1).
- See further details from the government's January 22 announcement here:
- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/vaccines#phases>

Question- *We've read the articles about Covid and people with Down Syndrome dying 10-15 times more than the general population. When do adults with Down Syndrome who live at home receive their vaccination? How do we advocate for them to be a priority? Will it be scheduled? Or will our son need to wait until they get to the 30-year-olds, sometime in the Fall?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- We are aware of the concerns around Down Syndrome and COVID-19.
- We are still figuring out the details of the vaccine plan beyond quarter 1 (Jan-March).
- These plans will include how to get information to people about where and how the vaccine will be available to them.
- There will be lots of different ways for people to access the vaccine when it is available.
- Family doctors will be included in the plan, but we do not yet have the details.
- We will have much more vaccine available in quarter 2 (April May June). This means we will be able to include many more people in the plan.
- NOTE: More details were provided in the Jan. 22 announcement here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/vaccines#phases>

Question- *When will I know it's my time? How will our names be shared so we can get the vaccine? Who will contact us? Where will I get the vaccine? Can my doctor give it to our daughter who is non-verbal and has CP?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- There is a team putting together a plan to get you the answers to these questions soon.
- We will also work with CLBC to help get the most updated information out to you.

- Family doctors will be included in the plan, but we do not yet have the details.
- The [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) is the best place to get the most updated information about COVID and the vaccine plan.

Question- *I am very concerned with the new variant of coronavirus that is more contagious from the UK and South Africa. Does the vaccine stop it? Will the new virus mean we have to close even more places?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- We think the vaccine will stop the new COVID variant, but we don't yet know 100%.
- We are watching the science and other parts of the world to understand better how this new variant behaves.
- So far, we haven't seen a lot of this new variant in BC.

Question- *Do some people have allergies to the vaccine? Will there be another way to get vaccine protection if you have allergies to something in it?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- The Health Canada website [here](#) has information about the approved vaccines including:
 - ingredients and allergies
 - how they work
 - how they're given
 - possible side effects
- If you are allergic to something in one vaccine, there might be another vaccine that will work instead.
- Contact someone from your health care team, like your doctor, to find out the best option for you.
- There will be a number of different vaccines to choose from.

Question- *How will people be supported to make their own decisions around the vaccine? What safeguards are in place to make sure people aren't being influenced to get or not to get the vaccine?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- It's important that people have the right information to make their own decision about whether or not to get the vaccine.
- There is a lot of misinformation about the vaccines going around.
- [Health Canada](#) and the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) are two places that have up to date and accurate information about COVID and vaccines.
- Let us know if the information on these websites are hard to understand. We want you to have easy to understand information that will help you make the right decision for you.

Answer from Ross

- We need to support people to make decisions about the vaccine in the same way we do for other health decisions.
 - Some people have substitute decisions makers.
 - Most people will be making on their own decision with support from someone they trust.
 - Many people have appointed someone to support their decision making using a Representation Agreement. You can learn more about Representation Agreements [here](#).
 - It is important to have all the information needed to make the right decision for you. For example- do you understand the risks of getting the vaccine AND the risks of not getting the vaccine.
 - Even if some people choose not to get the vaccine there will be enough people who do get it that will help protect those who didn't. This is called herd immunity.
 - Visit the [Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities](#) (HCARDD) website for more plain language information about COVID-19 and the vaccine.
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- [Things to know about the COVID vaccine](#)
 - [What happens when I get the COVID vaccine](#)

Question- *Do the new guidelines for wearing masks in public buildings apply to people going to day programs which are delivered in a building specifically for that purpose (not a public space)? Do the new guidelines mean staff and individuals are required to wear masks at all times or only when in building when physical distancing cannot be maintained.*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- There are *recommendations* about masks and there are *orders* about masks.
- An order is a strict rule that needs to be followed.
- The order applies to public spaces. For example: In a doctor's office the public spaces would include shared hallways, doorways, waiting rooms..
- Regardless of whether it is an order or recommendation, there are accommodations if people cannot wear a mask.
- No one should be denied access to a public place if they are not able to wear a mask.
- For a day program, that is not a public space, we recommend wearing a mask, especially if physical distancing is hard to do.
- Staying 2 meters apart and frequent hand washing are the best ways to stop the spread of COVID. Wearing a mask is an added layer of protection to these things, especially when indoors.
- Remember, it's not about a space being public or private that makes the spread of COVID less risky.
- COVID travels on people, so the more you wash and keep your distance from others the more you will be protected.

Question- *Do you have recommendations about the type of masks for support staff to wear when supporting clients with hearing loss and autism spectrum where deciphering facial expression is important.*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- We don't have the science available to make specific recommendations about masks for these situations.

- Masks should never get in the way of someone receiving an essential service, like getting support for daily living.
- When masks make it difficult for someone receiving support, you can try layering in other protection. For example- keeping physical distance and putting in physical barriers.

Question: Some of us have respite funding but cannot use it because it is hard to hire someone. Some may not have the respite funding they need. What are our options? I am grateful for the new flexible respite options CLBC has recently made available until June. If the pandemic goes beyond June, will this be extended? Will CLBC be asking families to return unspent respite funding during the pandemic?

Answer from Ross:

- It has been critical for families to step and provide extra caregiving during this time.
- CLBC recognizes families are tired and that it is hard to find respite.
- There is now greater flexibility in how respite funding can be used.
- Visit the CLBC website [here](#) to learn about the new interim guidance for flexible respite.
- If you don't have respite funding and need it, then yes please reach out to your local CLBC office.
- The flexible respite option will be available until at least the end of June.
- CLBC wants to see these funds used to give families a break now when you need it the most.
- It is important to still keep track of how you are using your respite funds.
- If you did receive an invoice for unspent funds, contact your local CLBC office to discuss a plan that works for you.
- CLBC won't be sending out any more invoices while this flexible respite option is in place.

Question- I didn't have enough money before COVID and now I have even less because everything is so expensive and its even harder getting a job. Will the extra money on my PWD cheque end in March, even if the pandemic continues?

How do we share with the government that we don't have enough money to live?

Answer from Minister Simons:

- I understand people are looking for a stable increase in PWD rates, not just an increase here and there during a pandemic.
- I will be working very hard to get a raise in the PWD rates.
- Right now, people will receive \$150 extra until the end of March.
- You can also apply for the BC COVID Recovery Benefit [here](#).
- Budget conversations are happening right now, and this is on the top of my list.
- The only promise I can make now is that I'm working hard to get a raise in the PWD rates.

Stay tuned for details on the next CLBC Teleconference for Individuals and Families on February 16. Remember to submit your questions in advance to CLBCinfo@gov.bc.ca

Thank-you!