



PHO makes masks mandatory and emphasizes importance of keeping schools open



“We are in our second surge and it’s proving to be a challenge...We need to relieve the stress on our health care system right now...We need to keep our essential activities and services open and operating safely. We need to keep our schools open and operating safely.”

– PHO Dr. Bonnie Henry

New orders put in place

B.C. is now experiencing a surge in the pandemic with increased community transmission, outbreaks, and effects on our health care system in every health authority. PHO Dr. Bonnie Henry has now applied the regional orders to Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Health province-wide.

New expanded orders have been put in place, effective until midnight December 7 to ensure that we get through one to two incubation periods. The PHO will regularly review progress and wants to see a slowing down of transmission.

Reduced social activities in homes and outside

The orders call for no social gatherings in homes other than with those who live there and to reduce social interactions of any size outside of our homes. Those who live alone can spend

time with one or two people if they regularly spend time with them. All indoor and outdoor events are not allowed to take place until further notice.

Masks now mandatory for all indoor public and retail settings, but not in schools

The PHO has made clear that wearing masks is one of the ways we can prevent transmissions, along with practising physical distancing, washing our hands and staying away from others if not feeling well. The PHO has asked the Minister of Public Safety to issue a requirement to wear masks for all indoor public and retail

spaces for staff and customers, except when eating or drinking.

This requirement does not apply to anyone who is unable to put on or take off a mask on their own, to children under the age of two, or to schools. Schools are not considered open public spaces as members of the public cannot just walk into a school. We have layers of protection in schools as defined by safety plans.

The existing protocols and guidelines in the [COVID-19 Operational Guidelines](#) and the [Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#) remain in effect.

We recognize that our members face many challenges in the face of this continuing pandemic. Dr. Bonnie Henry has also recognized those working in schools for their contribution to keeping schools open—and has underscored how important this is for children. CUPE is committed to supporting safe workplaces for our members and we follow the guidelines set by the PHO. We continue to advocate for K-12 members and expect to have opportunities to meet with public health in the future.