

Province declares state of emergency to support COVID-19 response

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News Release

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The British Columbia government has declared a provincial state of emergency to support the provincewide response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, made the declaration based on the recommendation from B.C.'s health and emergency management officials, after Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s provincial health officer, declared a public health emergency on Tuesday, March 17, 2020.

"Declaring a state of emergency is an important measure to support our provincial health officer and minister of health in swift and powerful response to the COVID-19 pandemic," Farnworth said. "We are working with partners across government and industry to co-ordinate emergency response efforts, and we won't hesitate to use the tools available to us to keep people safe."

Declaring a state of emergency allows the Province, through the minister, to implement any provincial emergency measures required with access to land and human resource assets that may be necessary to prevent, respond to or alleviate the effects of an emergency. This includes securing the critical supply chains to make sure people have access to essential goods and services, and that infrastructure necessary in a response is readily available.

The state of emergency is initially in effect for 14 days, once issued, and may be extended or rescinded as necessary. The state of emergency applies to the whole province and allows federal, provincial and local resources to be delivered in a co-ordinated effort.

As House leader, Farnworth is also working to resume the legislature to complete urgent government business to expedite government's response to COVID-19.

"We are all working together and introducing these powers to protect our people, our health system and our economy," said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. "These are temporary measures that will help us immensely in the long term. I encourage British Columbians to respect the situation as it stands and remember that each of us has an individual responsibility and civic duty to look out for each other by complying with all emergency orders."

The Province has created 1 888 COVID-19 to connect British Columbians needing non-medical information about COVID-19. This includes the latest information on travel recommendations and social distancing, as well as access to support and resources from the provincial and federal governments. 1 888 COVID-19 is available seven days a week, from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. in 110 languages. The 811 number is also in place for medical-related COVID-19 questions.

Quick Facts:

- Declarations of provincial states of emergency may be issued by the minister responsible under the Emergency Program Act.
- The provincial government can extend the period of a declaration made by the minister responsible for further periods of time.
- During the 2017 wildfire season, B.C. was in a provincial state of emergency for 10 weeks, from July 7 to Sept. 15.
- The last provincial declaration of state of emergency was issued in August 2018, also to deal with wildfires.

Learn More:

Help flatten the curve by checking symptoms online at <https://covid19.thrive.health/>

If you or a family member have symptoms or need medical advice, call 811.

For the most up-to-date health information on the #COVID19 outbreak follow the BC Centre for Disease Control at [@CDCofBC](https://twitter.com/CDCofBC) (twitter.com) or visit: www.bccdc.ca

For up-to-date non-health information, including the latest travel restrictions and provincial and federal programs, call 1 888 COVID-19 or visit: gov.bc.ca/covid19

For the latest COVID-19 updates and statements, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/Search?q=COVID-19>

The latest orders and directives from the provincial health officer can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics>

A backgrounder follows.

CONTRACT STORY

Backgrounders

[Emergency Program Act and Public Health Act](#)