

April 7, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

RE: Supporting BC Nurses and Health Professionals During the COVID-19 Response

Thank you for your dedication, professionalism and service in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic that is affecting all British Columbians. Many nursing and health professionals across BC have made significant contributions to the response to COVID-19. We are extremely proud of all our health care professionals in their response to this challenge. It has been exemplary. Health care professionals are uniquely critical to enabling BC's health system to deliver care to patients, clients, residents and others needing health care and we are here to support you.

As COVID-19 cases continue to increase, the BC health care system will come under extreme pressure. The next few weeks will reveal whether the many measures put into place to reduce this pressure will be successful. We must be prepared for the possibility that this pandemic will test our resiliency and recognize that our real strength comes from working together.

Our provincial government and health authorities have taken significant steps to establish capacity for COVID-19 patients by decanting our acute care hospitals and preparing equipment and staff to be ready. Collectively, we are also working with regulatory bodies and the post secondary institutions to enable emergency temporary registrations of health professionals, as well as employing students as appropriate, to support our health system over the next few months. Despite these efforts, we still may face staffing difficulties due to health care worker sickness or family caring responsibilities. Although challenging, we are confident that all of you will continue to respond rapidly and professionally.

A significant surge in COVID-19 cases will require nurses and other health professionals to be flexible in what they do. You may be asked to work in unfamiliar circumstances or in clinical areas outside of your usual practice for the benefit of patients, individuals and the population overall. We want to assure you that we recognise this extraordinary situation may require temporary changes to how you are being called upon to practice, and that the Provincial Nursing and Allied Health Council are working closely with regulatory bodies and other key partners to support you in practice as this pandemic unfolds.

We recognize that this is a stressful time, and that you may have questions regarding your professional practice as well as concerns about personal safety. During this challenging time, we ask you all to uphold the core principles of your practice and lean on one another, and your leadership for guidance and support.

Finally, we can't thank you enough for all the efforts you are already making. Collectively we are strong, caring, and resilient. We are confident of the commitment, dedication and hard work that you have and will continue to have in your response to this pandemic in BC. Your professionalism and work ethic have never been more vital or more valued.

Sincerely, Provincial Nursing and Allied Health Council

Lorraine Blackburn, VP Professional Practice and Chief Clinical Information Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health

Dawn Nedzelski, Chief Nursing Officer, Chief Professional Practice, Clinical Informatics and Learning and Performance Support, Island Health

Kelly Gunn, Vice President Primary and Community Care and Chief Nursing Executive, Northern Health

Becky Palmer, Chief Nursing Officer, First Nations Health Authority

Leanne Heppell, Chief Operating Officer Acute Care and Chief of Professional Practice and Nursing, Providence Health

Jacqueline Per, Executive Director, Patient Experience & Chief Nursing and Allied Health Officer, Fraser Health

Fiona Karmali, Interim Chief Nursing Officer; Executive Director, Professional Practice, Clinical Informatics and Policy Office, Provincial Health Services Authority

Cheryl Whittleton, Chief Nursing Officer and Professional Practice Lead, Interior Health

Natasha Prodan-Bhalla, Chief Nurse and Professional Practice Officer, Nursing Policy Secretariat, Ministry of Health

Joanne Maclaren, Executive Director, Nursing Policy Secretariat, Ministry of Health