



LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PANDEMIC HAZARD PLAN APPENDIX

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APPENDIX __: PANDEMIC HAZARD PLAN

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PANDEMIC HAZARD BACKGROUND

- This hazard plan is for public health events that are pandemic in nature and where the principle issue is human health, and reducing any consequential impact on essential services
- Biological agents are the cause of pandemic events and include bacteria, viruses, fungi, other microorganisms and their associated toxins. They have the ability to adversely affect human health in a variety of ways, ranging from mild, allergic reactions to serious medical conditions and death. These organisms are widespread in nature; they are found in water, soil, plants, and animals.
- Pandemics can be naturally occurring disease outbreaks that occur at local, provincial, national and international levels.
- Pandemics can be the result of:
 - Accidental exposure to pathogens (disease causing agents) in the context of biomedical diagnostics and research;
 - Significant shortages of drugs and biologics; or
 - Intentional use of pathogens or biotoxins (poisonous substances produced by a living organism) against humans, plants, or animals for harmful purposes

PANDEMIC PLAN SCOPE

- This plan takes into consideration, but is not a replacement for, City of Merritt's Business Continuity Plan.
 - *Tip: A community's Business Continuity Plan should take into consideration measures to maintain critical services and protect employee health.*
 - *Note: employers are required by law to ensure that work is being conducted safely, and to protect their workers from all work-related hazards, including exposure to infectious diseases. Section 115 of the Workers Compensation Act specifies that employers are not only responsible for their own workers, but also for any other workers who may be present at their workplace. This is a strong consideration within the City of Merritt's Business Continuity Plan or relevant Human Resource plans or programs.*
- The scope of this plan is limited to the activities of the City of Merritt outside of the health system and describes the ways in which the City of Merritt coordinates and interacts with health partners, and the provincial and federal governments to support public health.
- The medical response for pandemics will be managed by those agencies responsible for disease control and public health, applying provisions of the [Public Health Act](#) as applicable.
- The City of Merritt will support Interior Health Authority as requested/directed during a pandemic response in accordance with the [Public Health Act](#)
- For information related to the health sector response to the influenza pandemic COVID-19, see the [BC COVID-19 Response Plan](#) that outlines the activities and responsibilities of the health sector to mitigate and respond to an influenza pandemic including plans and guidelines for public health, clinical care, Indigenous peoples, human resources, communications and education, and psychosocial support.

- The Pandemic Hazard Plan for the City of Merritt is scalable and flexible. The severity of the pandemic, the requirements for coordination and communications, and the existence of unique policy issues, will determine the degree of engagement and the extent of activities required by the City of Merritt.

PLAN ACTIVATION

- The activation of this plan will be determined through consultation between, and recommendation from, the Ministry of Health (HLTH), including through Interior Health Authority and Emergency Management BC.
- The activities carried out in the plan during activation are not reimbursable under the Emergency Program Act unless a Provincial State of Emergency is declared by the minister responsible for the Emergency Program Act or the Lieutenant Governor in Council.
- This plan will be activated in coordination with the [BC COVID-19 Response Plan](#).

Standing Up Advance Planning Unit:

- Prior to any pandemic being declared, the situation may require an activation of the Advance Planning Unit to coordinate preliminary planning and preparation for future impacts to Merritt.
- *It is important to identify triggers that may warrant the activation of an Advance Planning Unit within the EOC structure for your community. Examples of possible triggers are:*
 - *Advice has been received from your Health Authority or from the Province to start considering the impacts of a contagious outbreak to your community*
 - *Elected officials within the community are starting to ask questions regarding future impacts to the community that require a heightened effort to answer*
 - *There have been non-health related impacts to neighbouring communities that may impact your community soon, e.g. supply chain, tourism, school, or business impacts*

Standing Up the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC):

- If/when the World Health Organization designates a pandemic, or in response to imminent impacts to the community, Merritt will activate the EOC at a Level 2 as per the EOC Operational Guidelines. The EOC will respond to the pandemic as described in this pandemic hazard plan.

CITY OF MERRITT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Maintain essential services for Merritt;
- Set priorities for maintaining public safety;
- Manage City of Merritt's business continuity;
- Liaise with EMBC regional office/PREOC, health authority and other support agencies for situational awareness;
- Work with local businesses to maintain a level of service in the community for critical services;

- Initiate prevention measures as recommended by the Ministry of Health in the City of Merritt's work places to reduce staff infection and exposure to pandemic;
- Work collaboratively with Interior Health regarding public health campaigns;
- Support Interior Health, according to [existing agreements and/or discussions during pandemics];
- Host (virtual, if reasonable) public education and planning sessions with key stakeholders in the community including business owners and school districts in conjunction with the applicable Health Authority; and
- Plan for City of Merritt to re-establish normal business

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Pandemics are unique from other hazard events in various ways including:

- The event is not isolated and will stretch across regional, provincial and international borders at the same time.
- Nearly simultaneous impacts across jurisdictions could affect the activation of existing mutual aid agreements amongst governments, agencies and corporations.
- Supply chain disruptions could occur.
- Contract services may be impacted and can delay or stop work on community projects and/or construction.
- Uncertain timing and impacts of pandemics require flexibility to address critical needs as determined by the event.
- A pandemic is a long-term event with multiple peaks (also called waves). As a result, operational requirements and considerations are different from events with a shorter duration.
- Unlike other hazards, which are communicated from the site level to the City of Merritt and then provincial level, pandemics are communicated from the international and national level to the provincial and local levels.
- For influenza pandemics, and if possible, vaccine development will begin as soon as the vaccine seed strain is developed and delivered to the manufacturer. It may take several months to produce a vaccine. For other pandemics a vaccine will likely need to be developed anew.
- The [Emergency Program Act \(1996\)](#) (EPA) and the [Compensation for Disaster Financial Assistance Regulation](#) do not recognize a pandemic outbreak as a disaster or emergency. Therefore, local authority costs for response activities related to pandemic are not eligible for reimbursement under the Compensation and Disaster Financial Assistance Regulation. Despite this interpretation, the Minister responsible for the EPA or the Lieutenant Governor in Council may declare a provincial state of emergency should they be satisfied that an emergency exists or is imminent and specific extraordinary powers under the Act are required.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES FOR PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The following list outlines some of the activities, challenges, and consequences that the City of Merritt may need to manage because of a pandemic:

- Consistent and ongoing information for the public regarding the level of risk and preventative measures will be required. Additional communication efforts may be required to manage public fears and personal concerns.
- The maintenance of regular City of Merritt services (and at all levels of government) may be interrupted or reduced due to staff shortages. The City of Merritt may need to develop modified business practices in order to maintain critical services.
- Policy may need to be developed in order to facilitate the response to a pandemic and to address key issues.
- An extreme public health emergency may result in an increased demand for psychosocial, mental and behavioural health services.
- If school and daycare closures are recommended by the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) or Medical health Officer (MHO), it will result in increased demands on parents and the need for guidance to school boards and independent schools regarding levels of risk and appropriate public health measures.
- A pandemic may impact Merritt's multi-modal transportation network, including both government and industry provided transportation services.
- The health structure may require unconventional support to maintain levels of service and coordinate the public health response.

POSSIBLE IMPACTS TO LOCAL ECONOMY

Pandemics may impact the economy over the long-term and in a variety of ways, such as:

- decreased production levels due to illness;
- temporary loss of jobs and business closures (particularly small to mid-size enterprises);
- reduction or restrictions on public gatherings;
- potential impact to supply chains;
- a negative impact to the agricultural sector;
- adverse ripple effects in the world-wide investment community; and
- decreased activity within the hospitality and tourism industry due to travel restrictions.

Please note the preceding consequences include extreme scenarios and the extent of these impacts and countermeasures will be determined by the characteristics of the disease. Not all pandemics will overtax the health, economic and/or social support systems.

LOCAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Consistent and ongoing information for the public regarding the level of risk and preventative measures will be required. Additional communication efforts may be required to manage public fears and personal concerns.
- The City of Merritt will leverage existing communications from the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) as the authoritative source of

information and news on the situation. The City of Merritt will make certain a timely flow of accurate, consistent information is disseminated to staff, volunteers, and contractors; and to customers and the public.

- Clear lines of communication must be established, and unlike other hazards, which are communicated from the site level to local authority/First Nations and then provincial level, pandemics are communicated from the international and national level to the provincial and local levels.

CROSS-GOVERNMENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Response to pandemics is different than other emergency responses as it consists of a top-down approach, where the City of Merritt takes direction and guidance from the Province, the Province takes direction and guidance from the Government of Canada, and Canada considers guidance and direction from international agencies, specifically the World Health Organization (WHO). The below lists outline some of the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government in response to pandemics.

Federal Government

- facilitate coordination of the overall federal, provincial, territorial (F/P/T) response;
- support development of technical guidance, technical and policy recommendations, protocols, and other products that may be required to facilitate a consistent F/P/T response;
- act as the national focal point for the WHO on all pandemic matters and manage all international aspects of the response to a public health event caused by a biological agent (e.g., technical discussions, aid requests);
- see that risk assessments are prepared and communicated, as required;
- facilitate access to surge capacity (from federal programs, if needed) with regards to employees and resources (including mobilizing medical supplies in the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile), to support P/T responses as required;
- facilitate the acquisition of extra medical supplies through Procurement Services and Purchasing Canada and other federal agencies as appropriate;
- provide travel health notices and other health-related information relevant to international travel;
- exercise powers under the Quarantine Act to protect public health by taking comprehensive measures to help prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases in Canada. Such measures may include, but are not limited to, the screening, examining and detaining of arriving and departing international travellers, conveyances (e.g., airplanes and cruise ships) and their goods and cargo;
- provide regulatory authorization to market medical countermeasures (i.e., medications and vaccines);
- act as the focal point for vaccine manufacturers and international regulatory collaboration;
- provide regulatory authorization to conduct clinical trials;

- negotiate with manufacturers and establishing contracts for the F/P/T purchase of medical countermeasures and/or medical equipment (e.g., ventilators);
- conduct national monitoring of adverse reactions to medications and vaccines;
- provide medications and/or vaccines to federal populations not covered by arrangements for P/T provision; and
- provision of health services, medications, supplies and equipment for specified federal populations/employees who normally access federally operated health care services.

Provincial Government through Ministry of Health

- Implement, in coordination with the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) the [BC COVID-19 Response Plan](#);
- activate the Health Emergency Coordination Centre (HECC);
- direct the response activities of health sector partners;
- provide health services, including acute care, home care, long term care, community care, public health and ambulance services;
- contribute to the development, review and approval of technical guidance, technical and policy recommendations, protocols, and other products that may be required to facilitate a consistent F/P/T response;
- provide public health messaging and guidance;
- in coordination with the BCCDC conduct surveillance and reporting data to the federal level as required under the International Health Regulations and as agreed upon for the duration of the public health event response;
- provide medications and/or vaccines to recommended populations;
- share information regarding distribution and use of medications and vaccines, as may be developed and available, in their respective jurisdictions;
- monitor and reporting adverse vaccine reactions;
- develop plans to increase surge capacity;
- develop and maintain memoranda of understanding and protocols, as needed, to facilitate interprovincial/territorial movement of patients and licensed health care professionals during a response and other aspects of mutual aid;
- develop, as necessary, a strategy for collecting and monitoring data on health care service use;
- assist the health authorities in emergency procurement and delivery of medical supplies, equipment and pharmaceuticals; and
- work collaboratively to establish protocols and guidelines for prioritizing health care services during times of high service demand and staff or supply shortages in their respective jurisdictions.

BC Centre for Disease Control

- Provide technical scientific support to the PHO, Medical Health Officers and regional health authorities;
- implement an enhanced Public Health surveillance system to monitor pandemic activity, when appropriate;

- bears responsibility for providing guidelines for the distribution and use of vaccines (if available) in BC and the equitable distribution and use of anti-viral medications (if available);
- collect and share updated information on vaccine coverage, and the overall number of cases and deaths related to the pandemic;
- work with the PHO and HLTH to evaluate the use and effectiveness of vaccines and antiviral medications in reducing the number of severe cases and death; and
- develops guidelines to minimize the spread of a pandemic in the community including guidelines on detection and management of cases and contacts of the biologic agent, community measures such as social distancing and public health rapid response research and investigation

Provincial Government through Emergency Management BC

- Facilitate cross government coordination, communications and business continuity;
- active the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) or Provincial Regional Emergency Operation Centres (PREOC)s as required;
- assist with the distribution of health-related messaging that is developed by Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and HLTH;
- coordinate with emergency management stakeholders;
- facilitate information sharing between local authorities, First Nations, health authorities and key stakeholders;
- hold coordination calls to inform external stakeholders of the pandemic and anticipated impacts;
- support local authorities by sharing information and advising on policy questions and decisions.

Other Provincial Agencies:

- Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD): ensure children in care have the services and supports they need to stay healthy
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR): provide financial, housing and other supports for vulnerable SDPR clients, or for those eligible for assistance; provide a network of trained staff and facilities to assist across the Province, under the direction of EMBC; provide information and analysis regarding the status of at-risk populations; implement operational plans to ensure the Province's most vulnerable populations have access to financial and other critical resources
- Ministry of Education (EDU): priority to minimize disruption of services while ensuring students' and staff safety; assist with the distribution of health-related messaging developed by the PHO and HLTH
- Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST): disseminate relevant information to BC Post-Secondary Institutions (PSI); request regular updates from the PSIs on impacts to students, staff, and services; provide support to meet the immediate needs of students during the emergency; advise institutions and students that StudentAid BC has policies in place covering the interruption of studies due to cancellation of classes/and or institution closures

- **Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR):** work with HLTH and EMBC to develop protocols with their Key First Nations Partners about information transmission to Indigenous Peoples; work with Canada/First Nations organizations to address any service or funding gaps that fall outside existing agreements
- **Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (TRAN):** provide analysis for the movement of people and goods via highways, ports, airports, railroads, public transit and ferries; prepare operational plans for the implementation of transportation strategies within BC
- **Ministry of Agriculture:** provide advice on the protection and health of livestock and poultry; provide agriculture related information to local governments and First Nations as required; advise on the management of flocks/herds affected by pandemic; provide laboratory services for the surveillance and diagnosis of zoonotic diseases that could spread to or from livestock and poultry; communicate to agricultural producers and stakeholders through agriculture industry associations
- **Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (TAC):** coordinate the needs of travellers moving within the province on cruise ships, public transportation (buses and ferries), planes, train border crossings, etc.; ensure tourists and tourism businesses are informed and aware of situation through communications that are consistent with the PHO
- **Ministry of Labour (LBR) through WorkSafeBC:** continue its work to promote workplace health and safety for BC workers and employers, develop and enforce the Occupational Health & Safety Regulation, and administer the workers' compensation program
- **Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness (JEDC):** advise on the viability and risks associated with inward and outward-bound trade missions, and on policy shifts for international trade; support the small business sector in adapting to pandemic related impacts (and eventual recovery) working closely with LBR and TAC)
- **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH):** provide pandemic planning information to services providers of emergency shelters, supportive housing, homeless outreach, and other BC Housing-funded programs, if required;

Regional Health Authorities

- Plan the health system response to a pandemic within their region with direction from both the PHO/HLTH including:
 - prioritized delivery of health services;
 - protocols for vaccine and anti-viral use and inventories of stockpile supplies;
 - plans for mass vaccination delivery;
 - identification of alternative care locations and resources;
 - protocols for continued delivery of acute and residential care services;
 - risk communication strategies for internal and external stakeholders; and
 - education plans for health care providers and the public
- Liaise with local partners to facilitate coordinated response
- Participate in disease and public health surveillance, including the reporting of exceptional disease incidents to the BCCDC and PHO
- Activate a health authority EOC to:

- Implement regional health authority pandemic response plan and support the continuity of services;
- Implement public health and infection control measures to reduce the spread of disease;
- Coordinate the dissemination of medication and supplies;
- Coordinate immunization clinics once/if vaccines become available;
- Implement the [Pandemic Influenza Psychosocial Support Plan for Health Care Workers and Providers](#)
- Coordinate information sharing and public messaging with local governments
- Medical Health Officers (MHO) in each health authority are responsible for directing the public health response, and have wide ranging authority under the [Public Health Act](#), including for:
 - Restricting and monitoring activities in their region that can potentially increase the spread of a pandemic, in consultation with the PHO
 - Direct the provision of care for those infected with a pandemic and order isolation and/or quarantine measures of individuals or groups

First Nations Health Authority

- Support communities in preparing for a pandemic by facilitating testing and revision of community level plans as needed;
- Facilitate communities' response to a pandemic (e.g., support mass immunization clinics, provide training, guidance documents, etc.);
- Ensure health facilities have access to personal protective equipment (e.g. masks, gloves, gowns) during a pandemic; and
- Ensure that First Nations circumstances are reflected in overall pandemic planning at all levels of government

RESOURCES

ITEM	LINK
Emergency Management Planning Toolkit for Local Authorities and First Nations	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/local-emergency-programs/local-emergency-planning
FPT Public Health Response Plan for Biological Events	https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/emergency-preparedness/public-health-response-plan-biological-events.html
Public Health Act	http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/08028_01
British Columbia Pandemic Provincial Coordination Plan	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/provincial-emergency-planning/pandemic-provincial-coordination-plan.pdf
BC COVID-19 Response Plan	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/pandemic-influenza
BC Centre for Disease Control	http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/
HealthLink BC	https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/
Office of the Provincial Health Officer	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer
FEMA Pandemic Influenza Template	https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1396880633531-35405f61d483668155492a7cccd1600b/Pandemic_Influenza_Template.pdf
Provincial Health Services Agency	http://www.phsa.ca/
Fraser Health Authority	https://www.fraserhealth.ca/
Interior Health Authority	https://www.interiorhealth.ca/Pages/default.aspx
Northern Health Authority	https://www.northernhealth.ca/
Island Health Authority	https://www.islandhealth.ca/
Vancouver Coastal Health	http://www.vch.ca/