

Good morning, Ey Swayel. It's been a busy weekend, it is September 21st and I wanted to provide another update this week.

As you may know we have 14 schools where we've now sent exposure letters for COVID and I just want you to know about our processes and what you can expect if your school is involved. So once again, when there is a case, the health authority informs us and we issue a letter to the school. Even if there's one case attached to a school, the entire school and the entire community gets a letter. And in those letters, if anyone in the school or in the community is in need of additional watch, if you need to watch yourself for symptoms, like you've been in close proximity to this positive case, then you will specifically get a letter asking you to monitor for symptoms. And these letters are precautionary in nature. We've also had situations where there's been a case at a school and they were unsure who they were nearby in the school and so we didn't know who to exactly give those letters to or for example, monitor for symptoms, so we asked the whole school. So it's just a good example of the caution we're taking, and the transparency we're seeking. If you are in need to self isolate, you will be told directly and that will be 14 days. So this is the reality we're living in right now. It seems to be unfolding on us almost every day. And so I want to give a big shout out to parents, to students, to teachers, support staff, principals and vice principals. You're the ones living with it on a day to day basis on the ground. And I thank you so much.

I wanted also to put our numbers in perspective because it seems like Surrey is sticking out like a sore thumb right now. Why us? Why all the cases? Well, I looked on the COVID dashboard this morning. Vancouver Island, as a health region, has zero new cases, and nine active cases, the entire interior of British Columbia has three new cases and 25 active cases. For Fraser health, which is where we are, we have 70 new cases and 726 active cases. So when we have a school district with 75,000 students and 12,000 employees, there is going to be contact with our schools, we're just so big. So it's a different world for us in our community. And I really do think about Surrey as well, our enormous number of multi generational families. We are a community that care for our elderly, and our elderly care for their children and their grandchildren. I'm sure this is a worry for families and it's completely understandable. I want to also give a huge thanks to Fraser Health. It is their collaboration, their transparency that is driving things. I trust their work and their guidance. They have been amazing partners, they've been open, supportive, and they problem solve with us, and we meet with them every single day about every single case to go over the protocols and what we're doing.

So what are we seeing in these early days is that we've already had exposure letters go out in nine of our 20 secondary schools so almost half of our secondary schools. Older kids, bigger numbers. Many of these schools will be over 1500 students with well over 100 staff. This is the overwhelming number of our schools. We've also had only five of 101 elementary schools. So I say the "only" in terms of the reflection of almost half of all secondary schools. If that ratio was the same in elementary we would have probably given out over 50 letters in our elementary schools to date, and so that's just not happening. We will talk to health about that, but we know that younger children are less susceptible, have milder symptoms, and that seems to be unfolding of what we're seeing.

So my message to you this week is that this is part of what we're going to live with in the months ahead. Please do not come to work sick. Please do not send your children to school if they are sick. Please take care of our staff and yourselves and your families. Please continue to be vigilant with protocols. In the cases we've seen, the protocols clearly are keeping people safe and stemming or stopping the spread. These are the things like staying apart, wearing a mask, washing your hands, not touching your face. All of those things make a huge difference and unfortunately, this likely isn't going to get smaller. We're in the early days, and this is about finding a new balance. The balance between providing education to our children and stemming the tide of COVID. This is going to be our reality for several months ahead. I know our early numbers are big and causing concern, but I want you to think about this as just the beginning. We are going to have to figure out what this balance will look like. If there was a need for more concern and more alarm, I feel completely confident that health would be giving us that advice and guidance.

So once again, just a huge thank you to our staff who are managing this on the ground every single day. Thank you to our community for your patience and know that we will continue to be transparent, we will continue to reach out. So stay well and take care. It matters, each and every day.

Thank you very much. Hy'ce:pka