

## KEY MESSAGES

### 2020 Spring Tree Planting – COVID-19 Measures

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

Office of the Chief Forester - *Caring for BC's Forests*

April 24, 2020

- The COVID-19 pandemic has presented some unique and unprecedented challenges for all British Columbians. We know from the Provincial Health Officer that the measures that are in place are working and we must continue to work together to flatten the curve.
- We have strict measures in place to make sure anyone coming into B.C. from outside Canada is self-isolating as they are required to do by law and provide them the supports necessary to do so safely.
- At the same time, it's important to keep essential goods and services flowing, and government has designated essential service areas that are key to our economy and society – this includes forestry and silviculture.
- We have heard the concerns of rural and remote communities and First Nations in B.C. about people travelling through or into communities. We have heard you – and that is why we have developed guidelines to keep everyone safe while contributing to our economy.
- Safety for workers and the public is always a priority in the forest sector that's why the Provincial Health Officers orders and the BCCDC silviculture guidance document must be followed.
- Tree planting typically occurs in remote areas and rural communities throughout the province – the province has identified and is responding to the need to ensure there are resources and services to protect those in rural and remote communities.
- A new collaborative framework will help ensure people living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities in B.C. have access to critical health care they can count on to meet their unique needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future.
- The framework was developed through a partnership between the First Nations Health Authority, Northern Health and Provincial Health Services Authority. The work is guided by the principles of cultural safety and humility, and adds to work underway by the Rural Coordination Centre of BC.
- As part of this initiative, BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) has prepared significant additional resources to its fleet. This amounts to an additional 55 ground ambulances throughout the province, including six in Northern Health. In addition, BCEHS has prepared seven fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters for medical transport.

- B.C. is renowned for its commitment to prompt, science-based reforestation as it is an important step to ensure sustainable forest management address climate change and the recovery of areas which have been devastated by wildfires.
- This year, the Province had planned its single largest planting program of over 310 million trees, with much of it focused on areas impacted by 2017 and 2018 wildfires. With the proper precautions in place, the resulting new forests will benefit all British Columbians.
- Seasonal tree planters are a crucial part of ensuring B.C. can meet global demand for wood products, build a resilient forestry sector, and address the impacts of climate change and wildfires.
- Every year, about 5,000 tree planters primarily from B.C. and other Canadian provinces travel from their homes to work in remote camps and communities throughout the province.
- Guidance includes having sanitation stations at worksites, clean vehicles to transport staff from housing to work locations, physical distancing on the job and best practices for handling tools and equipment.
- We have also stressed the importance of workers taking physical distancing steps when accessing the local community to purchase goods and access services.
- Infection Prevention and Control Plans must be developed and reviewed by the Ministry. Ministry staff will visit camps to ensure plans are being followed. Should a violation of the PHO Order or adherence the guidelines be observed, a health official will be assigned to enforce the order.