



**EXTENSION OF THE SUSPENSION OF  
THE VARIANCE OF THE *GATHERINGS AND EVENTS ORDER*  
OF THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH OFFICER TO PERMIT  
*INDOOR WORSHIP SERVICES ON FOUR DAYS BETWEEN*  
*SUNDAY, MARCH 28 AND THURSDAY, MAY 13***

(Pursuant to Sections 30, 31, 32 and 39 (3) and (6) *Public Health Act*, S.B.C. 2008)

***April 19, 2021***

The *Public Health Act* is at:

<http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/content/complete/statreg/08028/?xsl=/templates/browse.xsl>

(excerpts enclosed)

**TO: RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES**

**WHEREAS**

- A. Recently the number of COVID-19 infections has increased significantly raising the risk of rapid exponential growth in cases, has resulted in increased hospitalizations, intensive care admissions and deaths, and is putting increased pressure on the health care system to care for people, increased pressure on the public health system to carry out contact tracing for the purpose of preventing further transmission, and is putting at risk the continued operation of schools, which is critical to the physical, mental and emotional health of children and youth;
- B. The gathering of people indoors poses the greatest risk of transmission of COVID-19;
- C. I reasonably believe that the risk posed by COVID-19 to the public has now become too great for me to permit indoor worship services and that it is necessary for me to take immediate action to protect the public health from the risks associated with indoor gatherings:

**Pursuant to the authority vested in me by section 39 (6) of the *Public Health Act*, I hereby extend the Suspension of the Variance of the *Gatherings and Events* order to provide for indoor worship services.**

**This extends the *Suspension of the Variance of the Gatherings and Events Order of the Provincial Health Officer to Permit Indoor Worship Services on Four Days Between Sunday, March 28 and Thursday, May 13, dated March 29, 2019.***

This Extension of the Suspension does not have an expiration date.

Pursuant to section 54 (1) (h) of the *Public Health Act*, and in accordance with the emergency powers set out in Part 5 of the *Public Health Act*, I will not be accepting requests for reconsideration of the Variance, the Suspension, or the Extension of the Suspension.

You are required under section 42 of the *Public Health Act* to comply with the *Gatherings and Events Order*.

Failure to comply with the Order is an offence under section 99 (1) (k) of the *Public Health Act*.

If you fail to comply with this Order, I have the authority to take enforcement action against you under Part 4, Division 6 of the *Public Health Act*.

You may contact me at:

Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer  
4th Floor, 1515 Blanshard Street  
PO Box 9648 STN PROV GOVT, Victoria BC V8W 9P4  
Fax: (250) 952-1570  
Email: [ProvHlthOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ProvHlthOffice@gov.bc.ca)

DATED THIS: 19<sup>th</sup> day of April 2021

SIGNED:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bonnie Henry  
MD, MPH, FRCPC  
Provincial Health Officer

DELIVERY BY: Posting to the BC Government and the BC Centre for Disease Control websites.

Enclosure: Excerpts of the *Public Health Act*.

**ENCLOSURE**

**Excerpts of the Public Health Act [SBC 2008] c. 28**

***Definitions***

***1 In this Act:***

**"health hazard"** means

- (a) a condition, a thing or an activity that
  - (i) endangers, or is likely to endanger, public health, or
  - (ii) interferes, or is likely to interfere, with the suppression of infectious agents or hazardous agents, or
- (b) a prescribed condition, thing or activity, including a prescribed condition, thing or activity that
  - (i) is associated with injury or illness, or
  - (ii) fails to meet a prescribed standard in relation to health, injury or illness;

**When orders respecting health hazards and contraventions may be made**

**30** (1) A health officer may issue an order under this Division only if the health officer reasonably believes that

- (a) a health hazard exists,
- (b) a condition, a thing or an activity presents a significant risk of causing a health hazard,
- (c) a person has contravened a provision of the Act or a regulation made under it, or
- (d) a person has contravened a term or condition of a licence or permit held by the person under this Act.

(2) For greater certainty, subsection (1) (a) to (c) applies even if the person subject to the order is complying with all terms and conditions of a licence, a permit, an approval or another authorization issued under this or any other enactment.

**General powers respecting health hazards and contraventions**

**31** (1) If the circumstances described in section 30 [*when orders respecting health hazards and contraventions may be made*] apply, a health officer may order a person to do anything that the health officer reasonably believes is necessary for any of the following purposes:

- (a) to determine whether a health hazard exists;
- (b) to prevent or stop a health hazard, or mitigate the harm or prevent further harm from a health hazard;

- (c) to bring the person into compliance with the Act or a regulation made under it;
- (d) to bring the person into compliance with a term or condition of a licence or permit held by that person under this Act.

(2) A health officer may issue an order under subsection (1) to any of the following persons:

- (a) a person whose action or omission
  - (i) is causing or has caused a health hazard, or
  - (ii) is not in compliance with the Act or a regulation made under it, or a term or condition of the person's licence or permit;
- (b) a person who has custody or control of a thing, or control of a condition, that
  - (i) is a health hazard or is causing or has caused a health hazard, or
  - (ii) is not in compliance with the Act or a regulation made under it, or a term or condition of the person's licence or permit;
- (c) the owner or occupier of a place where
  - (i) a health hazard is located, or
  - (ii) an activity is occurring that is not in compliance with the Act or a regulation made under it, or a term or condition of the licence or permit of the person doing the activity.

### **Specific powers respecting health hazards and contraventions**

**32** (1) An order may be made under this section only

- (a) if the circumstances described in section 30 [*when orders respecting health hazards and contraventions may be made*] apply, and
- (b) for the purposes set out in section 31 (1) [*general powers respecting health hazards and contraventions*].

(2) Without limiting section 31, a health officer may order a person to do one or more of the following:

- (a) have a thing examined, disinfected, decontaminated, altered or destroyed, including
  - (i) by a specified person, or under the supervision or instructions of a specified person,
  - (ii) moving the thing to a specified place, and
  - (iii) taking samples of the thing, or permitting samples of the thing to be taken;
- (b) in respect of a place,
  - (i) leave the place,
  - (ii) not enter the place,

- (iii) do specific work, including removing or altering things found in the place, and altering or locking the place to restrict or prevent entry to the place,
- (iv) neither deal with a thing in or on the place nor dispose of a thing from the place, or deal with or dispose of the thing only in accordance with a specified procedure, and
- (v) if the person has control of the place, assist in evacuating the place or examining persons found in the place, or taking preventive measures in respect of the place or persons found in the place;

- (c) stop operating, or not operate, a thing;
- (d) keep a thing in a specified place or in accordance with a specified procedure;
- (e) prevent persons from accessing a thing;
- (f) not dispose of, alter or destroy a thing, or dispose of, alter or destroy a thing only in accordance with a specified procedure;
- (g) provide to the health officer or a specified person information, records, samples or other matters relevant to a thing's possible infection with an infectious agent or contamination with a hazardous agent, including information respecting persons who may have been exposed to an infectious agent or hazardous agent by the thing;
- (h) wear a type of clothing or personal protective equipment, or change, remove or alter clothing or personal protective equipment, to protect the health and safety of persons;
- (i) use a type of equipment or implement a process, or remove equipment or alter equipment or processes, to protect the health and safety of persons;
- (j) provide evidence of complying with the order, including
  - (i) getting a certificate of compliance from a medical practitioner, nurse practitioner or specified person, and
  - (ii) providing to a health officer any relevant record;
- (k) take a prescribed action.

(3) If a health officer orders a thing to be destroyed, the health officer must give the person having custody or control of the thing reasonable time to request reconsideration and review of the order under sections 43 and 44 unless

- (a) the person consents in writing to the destruction of the thing, or
- (b) Part 5 [*Emergency Powers*] applies.

### **May make written agreements**

**38** (1) If the health officer reasonably believes that it would be sufficient for the protection of public health and, if applicable, would bring a person into compliance with this Act or the

regulations made under it, or a term or condition of a licence or permit held by the person under this Act, a health officer may do one or both of the following:

- (a) instead of making an order under Division 1, 3 or 4, enter into a written agreement with a person, under which the person agrees to do one or more things;
- (b) order a person to do one or more things that a person has agreed under paragraph (a) to do, regardless of whether those things could otherwise have been the subject of an order under Division 1, 3 or 4.

(2) If, under the terms of an agreement under subsection (1), a health officer conducts one or more inspections, the health officer may use information resulting from the inspection as the basis of an order under this Act, but must not use the information as the basis on which to

- (a) levy an administrative penalty under this Act, or
- (b) charge a person with an offence under this Act.

### **Contents of orders**

**39** (3) An order may be made in respect of a class of persons.

- (6) A health officer who makes an order may vary the order
  - (a) at any time on the health officer's own initiative, or
  - (b) on the request of a person affected by the order, following a reconsideration under section 43 [*reconsideration of orders*].

### **Duty to comply with orders**

**42** (1) A person named or described in an order made under this Part must comply with the order.

(2) Subsection (1) applies regardless of whether the person leaves the geographic area for which the health officer who made the order is designated.

### **Reconsideration of orders**

**43** (1) A person affected by an order, or the variance of an order, may request the health officer who issued the order or made the variance to reconsider the order or variance if the person

- (a) has additional relevant information that was not reasonably available to the health officer when the order was issued or varied,
- (b) has a proposal that was not presented to the health officer when the order was issued or varied but, if implemented, would
  - (i) meet the objective of the order, and
  - (ii) be suitable as the basis of a written agreement under section 38 [*may make written agreements*], or

- (c) requires more time to comply with the order.
- (2) A request for reconsideration must be made in the form required by the health officer.
- (3) After considering a request for reconsideration, a health officer may do one or more of the following:
- (a) reject the request on the basis that the information submitted in support of the request
    - (i) is not relevant, or
    - (ii) was reasonably available at the time the order was issued;
  - (b) delay the date the order is to take effect or suspend the order, if satisfied that doing so would not be detrimental to public health;
  - (c) confirm, rescind or vary the order.
- (4) A health officer must provide written reasons for a decision to reject the request under subsection (3) (a) or to confirm or vary the order under subsection (3) (c).
- (5) Following a decision made under subsection (3) (a) or (c), no further request for reconsideration may be made.
- (6) An order is not suspended during the period of reconsideration unless the health officer agrees, in writing, to suspend it.
- (7) For the purposes of this section,
- (a) if an order is made that affects a class of persons, a request for reconsideration may be made by one person on behalf of the class, and
  - (b) if multiple orders are made that affect a class of persons, or address related matters or issues, a health officer may reconsider the orders separately or together.
- (8) If a health officer is unable or unavailable to reconsider an order he or she made, a similarly designated health officer may act under this section in respect of the order as if the similarly designated health officer were reconsidering an order that he or she made.

## Offences

- 99** (1) A person who contravenes any of the following provisions commits an offence:

...

- (k) section 42 [*failure to comply with an order of a health officer*], except in respect of an order made under section 29 (2) (e) to (g) [*orders respecting examinations, diagnostic examinations or preventive measures*];