
STATEMENT

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Ministry of Health

Health Minister's update on Ebola preparedness

VICTORIA – Health Minister Terry Lake issued the following update on the health-care system's preparation for the low likelihood of a case of Ebola in B.C.:

“On Oct. 16, 2014, senior staff and I met with the CEOs of B.C.'s health authorities to discuss British Columbia's Ebola preparedness. I also met with Gayle Duteil, president of the BCNU, who raised concerns about the state of our readiness.

“We want to reassure British Columbians that health authorities have response plans in place if a suspected Ebola case does present, and that those plans are being refined and updated based on the latest information and reviews from Europe and the United States.

“The Ministry of Health has set up an Ebola preparedness task force, co-chaired by provincial health officer Dr. Perry Kendall and associate deputy minister Lynn Stevenson, which will co-ordinate information and best practices across the regional health authorities. The task force is meeting regularly and will address, as a priority, equipment needs, training needs and preparedness, as well as update clinical information on how best to provide treatment and follow up in the unlikely event that a person is diagnosed with Ebola.

“The task force is reviewing the training in the health authorities to ensure it is being applied consistently across the province and based on the current national guidelines. As well, the task force is asking health authorities to prioritize training for health-care workers who would be engaged with a patient.

“We are continuing to talk with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) on their protocols and the most effective measures to protect health-care workers and the public. Over the weekend PHAC is reviewing equipment standards and will be making recommendations early next week. Once they make their recommendations, B.C. will review and update our protocols as needed. Health authorities have been reviewing and updating their inventory and availability of personal protective equipment, including the availability of N95 protective respirators for cases that may require them.

“In addition, the task force is looking at designating a single referral hospital to treat possible cases of Ebola in the Lower Mainland as well as the other referral hospitals in the regional health authorities that have not already designated a site. We will provide an update early next week.

“We also welcome the assistance offered by the federal government and the support it would provide in a B.C.-led response to an unlikely occurrence of a case of Ebola in B.C.

“Our experiences with the SARS outbreak in 2003 and H1N1 in 2009 have shown that British

Columbians can be confident of our preparedness and a vigilant response in the low likelihood that a case of Ebola materializes in B.C. Again, I want to thank all the front line health-care workers that are continuing their hard work to protect the public from the spread of all infectious diseases.

“It is worth reiterating that while the cases of transmission to health-care workers in Dallas are concerning to us, we can learn from those experiences and we will follow the findings from that investigation to help inform any updates to our plan.

“The risk remains very low. But British Columbians can be assured that hospitals, health authorities and the Ministry of Health are doing everything possible to be prepared to respond to a case of Ebola in B.C.”

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