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MAY 6, 2020

John Horgan: I'm here today to talk about BC's Restart Plan. COVID-19 has transformed our province. It's changed how we live, work, and connect with each other. It has put tremendous pressure on our health care system and it has challenged the way we conduct ourselves, in a way we could not have possibly imagined.

My sympathy goes to the families of the 124 British Columbians we have lost during the pandemic. Grandparents, parents, siblings loved ones, people who died, often times without the comfort of their loved ones, but instead there, at their last minutes, were health care providers, putting themselves at risk to comfort those who we have left behind. We are grateful to those health care workers and first responders who had been there to help the sick and the dying. Every day, they put themselves in harm's way. Every day, they have given themselves to fight this virus.

COVID-19 has taken something from all of us. Some more than others. Tens of thousands of British Columbians are out of work. Businesses are struggling. Many people are dealing with mental health challenges. And it has been weeks since we have seen our friends or our families. Many feel confined and alone. This pandemic has been tough on all of us.

And yet the people of BC have risen to the challenge with compassion and determination. Every day I am inspired, as Adrian and Dr Henry are, by the 1,494 people who have fully recovered from COVID-19. By the businesses that have retooled to create PPE for frontline workers here in BC. And for those essential workers that are doing their job to make sure we can get the goods and services we need to continue our families and our communities. I am inspired by neighbours helping neighbours, I'm inspired by artists and musicians lifting our spirits.

It is because of that collective effort and sacrifice that we have been able to flatten the curve and save thousands of lives. And we need to do this together as we go forward. All of this has been accomplished without a full lockdown. Thanks to the leadership and wisdom of Dr Henry and Minister Dix, we have put in place in BC a plan that has slowed the growth of the virus and put us in a place for a safe restart of our economy. It won't be the flipping of a switch. We're going to be proceeding carefully, bit by bit, one step at a time. Every step will be informed by the advice of the provincial health officer as well as the input from British Columbians in every corner of this province. We need to ensure people that people stay healthy and that British Columbians can move forward competently as we proceeded to the other side of the new normal.

The graph shows what is at stake. We are all here to continue to do our part to make sure that curve stays down and declines. That is what we are looking for, but it means when we see it, that people are safe. It means that we have capacity in our hospitals and it means that if you are sick anywhere in this province, we have the inability to give you that care that you're going to need. If we lose this discipline, everything we have worked for until this point will be lost. We need to get it right, and we need to make sure that we progress together, slowly and safely.

It was two months ago on March 5th that I activated BC's pandemic response plan alongside Dr Henry and Minister Dix. Two months. But today, we are starting the next chapter, the chapter called BC's Restart Plan. This is not a return to normal. As many have said, Dr Henry and others, we are going to the new normal.

Some people are afraid of opening up, and I understand that. They are not certain what it means for their loved ones and for their communities. We still need to make sure we are bracing to protect each other from this desperate virus, and in order to do that, we have to hang together. That includes real and remote communities who don't know what this virus will do as it proceeds through the province. It means that indigenous communities that are concerned about the devastation from past pandemics, they look to their elders and their knowledge keepers and say, how do we keep them safe in this environment? It's okay to be concerned. It is understandable to be concerned. We are here to reassure you that we are going to do everything we can to help, we're going to do everything we can to keep you safe.

BC's Restart Plan is informed by health experts, common sense, and practical decision-making. We will not move ahead and thus it is safe to do so. The restart will happen in phases, spaced over intervals of two to four weeks.

One of the three areas that we're going to be focusing on are personal care. Everyone must keep doing what we have been doing to stop the spread. That means washing your hands, keeping safe social distancing. As we interact, social interaction with other people, we need to make sure that our connections with each other are safe, and as we conduct economic activity, businesses and services that become available have to be phased in as part of this plan.

The good news is, we are already at phase one. This is because BC did not completely shut down. Many jurisdictions are only now returning to the place that BC has been at for some time. We already have safe operation for essential services to allow people to get basic supplies. We already have been putting more resources into hospitals and residential care. We already have child care centres open for essential workers. We already have K-12 learning in classrooms for the children of parents of frontline workers. We already have safe operations for construction, manufacturing, agriculture, silviculture, and many, many more businesses.

In the weeks ahead, BC will move into phase two of the Restart Plan. In this next phase, we must continue to maintain a high standard of personal conduct. We are asking people to use common sense and follow these five principles as we implement the Restart Plan. We are going to be focusing on personal hygiene, we're going to be staying at home if we are sick, we're going to focus on environmental hygiene, safe social interactions, and physical modifications. We expect British Columbians to practice these every day. We expect people to make informed choices about how to safely interact with each other.

As we start to relax some of the social restrictions, small social gatherings with physical distancing will be allowed. The choices you make about expanding your social circle will depend on your age, your occupation, and the health of the people that you live with. Here's what it can look like. Grandchildren visiting grandparents with safe social distancing. Play dates with kids, again, with safe social distancing. Small numbers of friends gathering outdoors or in homes -- again, small numbers. The key is, only small gatherings. And we still need to be mindful when

we are interacting with each other, especially with vulnerable people, that we keep our social circles tight. We are asking everyone to follow these principles and to use your common sense.

Restrictions on large gatherings are here to stay. Groups larger than 50 give the virus an opportunity to re-emerge and no matter how far apart you are, large gatherings will not be allowed.

Also at phase two, we'll be reintroducing elective surgeries. Minister Dix and I will be talking about that in more detail tomorrow, but this is the beginning of getting back to a place where our health care system can provide the important services we all need and depend on. We are also going to be returning to regulated health services like physiotherapy, dentistry, chiropractors, and in-person counselling.

I am happy to say that we will also be reopening provincial parks for day use. Gatherings outside is a good thing. Physical well-being, mental well-being, all are added to when we get outside and enjoy the splendour of BC, but we must do so in a safe manner. We can't congregate in large groups. When you visit a provincial park, do so mindful of the people around you and observe physical distancing.

Dr Henry has been clear that this physical distancing outside will reduce the likelihood of transmission of the virus. In fact, the likelihood is very low, provided you follow these basic guidelines. Some BC parks will be open in time for the Victoria Day long weekend. Let's enjoy that, but let's stay close to home. This is not the time for a road trip to another community for a hike or a holiday. If you have a provincial park in your area, by all means, visit it. Do not travel great distances. We need to stay close to home. That is a key part of our recovery.

The safe operation of retail businesses and offices is the other part of the second phase. Sectors that we have ordered closed need to work with WorkSafeBC to develop plans for safe reopening. Those would include hair salons, restaurants and pubs.

Any business restarting their operations must ensure that they are in compliance with public health officers' orders, and in line with the safety guidelines produced by WorkSafeBC. We'll support businesses as they take steps towards successful reopening. WorkSafeBC is developing industry-specific guidance to help employers bring workers and customers back safely.

I want to acknowledge the organizations that are already well into the planning stages, like the BC Restaurant Association, who is working on a sector-wide plan for the safe reopening of that industry, and the BC Recreation & Parks Association, who are working to bring back their programs.

Many retailers have already found ways to reopen with no-touch payment and plexiglass barriers. These plans take time and we need to get them right so that workers and consumers can feel safe. Everybody has to be confident as we move into the new normal. We can't just say businesses are open, let's come and spend. Consumers need to be confident that the businesses that they're patronizing have done the hard work to be safe for their workers and their customers.

We'll also be expanding access to child care and in-class learning for K-12 students. We understand that parents have questions about the safety of their children as they return to school. It's okay for parents to be concerned. I want to reassure you that many schools are already operating safely with in-class learning for the kids of essential workers.

We're not going to be forcing anyone to come back. Minister Fleming and I will be working to make sure students whose families need to have kids in class will have that opportunity. We will continue to prepare for the full resumption of classes in September.

For those that are graduating in 2020 and will not be having a ceremony, I regret that very much. I hope that there will be ways that we can mark this milestone in the days ahead. Maybe next year, we can have that party that you deserve after completing your Grade 12 education.

As we open up, we're going to be depending on our public transit system, which has seen a ridership decline in the neighbourhood of 80-85%. We've been doing what we can to improve hygiene and physical distancing on buses and SkyTrain. We'll have more to say about that in the days ahead.

Finally, we'll be recalling the Legislature in the next number of weeks. Elected members should be here to do what they can to collaborate on positive outcomes for the people of BC. I want to acknowledge the non-partisan approach that all members of the Legislature have taken to this point in time.

In the weeks ahead, government House leader Mike Farnworth will be discussing plans for debates, about the plans we have to go forward and the ideas the opposition wants to bring to bear so the people of BC can have confidence that our democracy continues to thrive and flourish in these difficult times.

Proceeding to the next step will depend on the outcomes and the path of COVID-19. Over the next months, we will continue to expand the number of businesses and services that can operate with strict safety protocols. If we're doing well and we see more opportunities, we'll be opening up more businesses, like more parks with camping, film & television production is very close, movie theatres, personal services like spas and hotels.

Phase four won't be enacted until there's a vaccine, treatments for COVID-19 or community immunity has been achieved. Until these things happen, BC will not be hosting rock concerts and conventions, or any other large gatherings beyond 50 people.

The success of these plans depend on a number of factors. To succeed, we're going to need large-scale testing, rapid identification and contact tracing. We're going to need 100% commitment to physical distancing, hand washing and following the orders and guidance of Dr Henry and BC health officials.

We're going to need to hold the line on borders, including mandatory quarantine for returning travellers and a time limit, of course, on non-essential travel. We're going to need to build up our health care system and work to make sure that we are resilient in the event of a further outbreak. We're going to need to maintain zero tolerance for illness in the workplace. If you're sick, you must stay home.

Most important to our success, we need to come together as a community and as a province. Businesses cannot succeed unless we decide to support them. The only way they will survive is if people have confidence when they walk through their doors that they will be well and that business will be well at the same time.

Every part of our province must be included. We have to make sure everyone is supported and that we move through this pandemic to the restart and the recovery.

When I heard about people of Asian descent being pushed to the ground and buildings being defaced with anti-Chinese slogans, I was angry. Hate has no place in BC -- period. We need to stand together, united against that type of racism, whenever we see it. COVID-19 does not discriminate. British Columbians shouldn't discriminate either. If we're going to get through this, we have to stop finger-pointing, put our differences aside and work together to get it done.

Our province was already in a public health emergency before the spread of COVID-19. Opioid deaths continue to climb in many parts of the province. We must work to bring these deaths down as well.

Climate change continues to be the challenge of our time. The wildfire season is starting. The flood season has not yet ended. As we meet all of these challenges, we must recommit to putting CleanBC, our climate action plan, at the centre of our recovery.

Today, we take our first steps. There's much more to do. The hard work starts with every step. We will do it by continuing to support rural and remote communities. We will do it by developing partnerships with indigenous peoples and working towards reconciliation. We will do it by making sure we deliver the support and resources our health care workers need.

Times are tough. They will get better. We're going to get through this. We're going to come back even stronger. Together, we can build back BC better than ever. Someone just to my left has said it very ably -- all of us need to be kind, be calm and be safe.

Q&A

Reporter: Hi there. I'm just wondering if you could explain who we can gather around the dinner table? And I know initially we were cautioned against hugs and handshaking. It kind of sounds like now the hugs are on the table. So, if I'm really careful about it, can I hug my mom on Mother's Day?

Horgan: Very good question. If my mom was here, I would want to hug her on Mother's Day. But these are choices you have to make. We are not prescribing to British Columbians who they interact with and how they interact with them, only to say that the best way to protect everyone is to observe social distancing, be sure you're washing your hands regularly.

But if your circle has been tight -- and I know, Bhinder, that your circle is tight -- I welcome you to hug your mom. But people have to make those choices. If your mom has got a compromised immune system, it's best to keep that distance. And we're saying quite clearly to British Columbians, as Dr Henry and Minister Dix have been saying for over 100 days now, we have a set of rules that, if we follow, we will all come out of this better.

And we have been successful as a province, extraordinarily successful by comparison to other jurisdictions in the world. Keeping in mind this is a global pandemic, British Columbians are doing very, very well. But we can't give up the ground we have made. Mother's Day is coming. Act responsibly. Be comfortable with your family. Keep the gathering slow and use your common sense.

Reporter: Good afternoon, Premier. I hear you saying hold the line on the borders. Does that mean that the 14-day self-isolation requirement will be maintained, both at the land border and the airport arrival? And, do you have any sense of how long it could be before we reopen the borders for regular crossing with the United States?

Horgan: That's a good question. And again, as I said in my remarks, and as Dr Henry has directed us with the work of her team at public health, is that when we see evidence that the curve is flattened, when we see evidence that cases in other jurisdictions are reduced to a place that we're comfortable, we will start to look at opening the borders in the months ahead.

But, at this point, if you're coming to BC, it has to be for essential service or essential business. And if you do come back from somewhere else in the world, and you're going to be residing in BC, you will have to observe a 14-day isolation period. We're going to be monitoring that with the federal government for the foreseeable future.

Reporter: Hi Premier. Just to ask you about the -- sorry for the echo -- regarding the situation involving voluntary returns to schools and child care, I have been speaking to a lot of child care operators who say that they're worried about being forced to open up at full capacity, or wondering what safety measures will be in place.

You mentioned earlier that everything is going to be voluntary. Could you elaborate on that?

Horgan: One of the things -- the silver lining, and there are numerous silver linings, as I said, people, the resilience of British Columbians, every day I marvel. One of the things that we focused on as a government when we were sworn in three years ago was developing a universal accessible affordable child care plan.

And now more than ever is that top of mind for British Columbians. It has been an imperative for our success as an economy, and for the wellbeing of families, making sure that all participants in the family can be part of the economy. Mostly women have been restricted in their access to the economy because of a lack of child care.

So we have been doing what we can to build up a very robust system. That has been shaken, no doubt. And we are going to continue to work with providers to make sure that they're comfortable. We're going to continue to work with early childhood educators to ensure that they're practicing physical distancing. They're working with children who are not always as amendable to suggestion, based on my experience as a parent.

And we need to find ways to work through that. But I know ECEs and child care providers are committed to their vocation, committed to the children of BC. And together we will get through this.

Reporter: Thank you, Premier. A key to this is staying home if you're sick. And I am wondering if you've got any further ideas about how your government is going to support especially those workers who are living paycheque to paycheque with that decision to stay home if you've got a sniffle?

Horgan: This is an issue that we have been focused on for quite a few weeks now. Again, it was the urging of the public health officer that we ensure that people do not come to the workplace when they're ill. One of the significant outbreaks that Minister Dix and Dr Henry spoke about in the poultry sector was a result of people coming to work when they should have stayed home.

That shone a light -- a graphic example -- of what we needed to address going forward, not just within this pandemic, but broadly. I acknowledged my own weaknesses in this regard having come to work when I should have stayed home over the past couple of years. And people are not heroes when they do that. They're villains.

Although, when you're a villain, you need to make sure you're feeding your family. There is often an economic imperative. That's the issue we need to address. I have been working with the federal government. Minister James has raised this issue with national finance ministers. And we're going to look at whether we evoke WorkSafe to achieve this, whether we use the Employment Insurance Programs. This is the one that we have been focusing on with the federal finance minister.

We're going to find a way to get there. But we have to get there. It is imperative to our wellbeing. It is imperative to us not just getting past COVID-19, but making this part and parcel of how we operate in the workplace.

Reporter: Thank you, Mr Premier. I wanted to get back to some comments you made about the upcoming long weekend, because, as you know, in coastal communities that means one question -- people travelling on the ferries. And people are looking for firm guidance on what is considered an essential trip on BC Ferries this coming long weekend? Can you go visit your grandmother in another town? Go to your second property? That sort of thing?

Horgan: These are very good questions. And our direction would be, if you don't need to be travelling, you shouldn't be travelling. We have been pretty clear on that. Having said that, as we start to move into the various phases of the Restart Plan, when we get into phase three later into the summer, that might be the better time to get to that second property if you have the good fortune of owning a second property in BC -- a cabin or a cottage.

You're a taxpayer, you have property in that community, you have a right to be there. But again, you also have to acknowledge and recognize the permanent residents in those communities may not have access to acute care facilities; may be concerned that the spread of the virus in their community is something that they want to avoid. And I think the best course of action would be to stay closer to your home until we get further into the summer.

We need to make sure that our BC Ferries system continues to operate. An 85% reduction in ridership year over year tells me that people aren't taking non-essential trips, or not an enormous amount of non-essential trips. But again, I hope people will exercise their good judgement and not travel to another community to enjoy the long weekend.

Every corner of BC is spectacular. And in my experience of travelling around BC through my lifetime -- where ever you live is an outstanding place. Stay there and enjoy it.

Reporter: Hi Premier. It has been mentioned in European countries that there is sort of a threshold of cases or transmission rate spikes that would re-trigger lockdowns. Does BC have a trigger point for going back to further restrictions? And if so, if perhaps a second wave is coming in the fall what could be the risk to workers and businesses if there is another shut down?

Horgan: Before I ask Dr Henry to respond to that, I will say that BC has been charting its own course from the beginning. Minister Dix and Dr Henry raised alarm bells about COVID-19 long before anyone else was doing so. And we benefitted from that as a community. And that is why we are where we are today.

We are now proceeding to the Restart Plan. And as I said, we are going to be doing it cautiously, based on the science. If we see a spike, we will respond. But Dr Henry will be giving us advice on that, so best pass it to her.

Bonnie Henry: this is something, obviously, that we have been very concerned about, and thinking about from the very beginning. And that is why this thoughtful and careful approach is the way we're going. We do not want to be starting and stopping and starting and stopping.

So I believe that this plan and the way we have put it together gives us the tools so that we can increase our contacts, our numbers, and our safe contacts, in a way that keeps us on a steady state for at least the coming months. As I have mentioned before, we don't know what's going to happen in the fall. We don't know if there is going to be a resurgence once influenza and other respiratory viruses come back.

So that's why it's so important. And part of our plan is to make sure that we continue to have the vigilance in public health system, the testing that we need, the contact tracing. And we will be monitoring things very carefully. But the plan, and the thoughtfulness, and the purpose that we have is to make sure that we can get through, at least until the fall, and we see what happens.

Reporter: I just wanted to clarify -- in terms of the social distancing and broadening our social circles. Are people now allowed to do that immediately or as of this weekend, or do they need to wait for this weekend? And a related question because I'm curious: What's the first thing you're going to do once these restrictions are lifted, whether it's going out for dinner, getting your hair cut, or hugging someone?

Horgan: I'll let Bonnie take the first part and I'll do the second part.

Henry: Not quite yet, please. We're telling you the planning and we're working with people now on the planning. We had another 23 people who were affected today, and we still have hundreds of people we're following in public health so we have a little bit of time. We're looking at the middle of May. If things continue and we're doing the things that we're doing in the next week and a half, by the long weekend is the time that we will be able to go out and hug our families.

Horgan: For our part, as government, we take guidance from right across the province. I have an economic recovery task force that represents a cross section of British Columbians who have been giving me advice. I talk to people regularly -- in fact, I feel like I've been on the telephone since we announced the pandemic back in early March here in BC, and what people are saying to me is that they're anxious to get to that next phase but they're also anxious to not give up the ground that we've made.

We've resisted announcing this plan, although we've been working on it for a month and a half, because oftentimes that's the trigger. People go, oh good, Horgan just said it's time to get back to normal. I'm not saying that, I'm saying we have a plan to move to what will be the new normal and we're going to be taking guidance along the way from British Columbians. People will open up their businesses and if no one shows up, it won't be a success. We need to make sure that consumers -- people -- are comfortable, that we are doing everything we can as a society to protect each other and it's not quite time to get back to regular operating procedure. We have laid out a plan that will go in phases.

After the Victoria Day long weekend, we expect we'll see more businesses see their plans put in place, we'll see more doors opening, restaurants will start to operate, pubs will start to open, you can get that haircut provided that we have a good understanding of how we can operate these businesses with appropriate physical distancing and safety as the highest priority. WorkSafe is there to help, public health officers are there to help.

I think all businesses want to get going, but they also want people to show up. That means all hanging together and waiting a few more days before we start the real Restart Plan, which will begin after the Victoria Day long weekend.

Reporter: You've outline a rough timeline for all those things you just mentioned -- month to month specifically business owners wanting dates. We know sectors will submit industry specific plans for approval, but how quickly can that be expedited and are there concerns of a backlog?

Horgan: As I said, many of our industries have been operating, admittedly at a reduced speed. But through Dr Henry and WorkSafeBC we maintained our construction industry; we have construction sites whether it's residential construction, building of schools, hospitals, roads -- you name it -- the part and parcel of building British Columbia has been going on, admittedly at a reduced pace. Now we can start to ratcheting that up, but we still have to keep these principles in place.

By not shutting down the way other jurisdictions did, we instead focused on how can we operate safely? We've been successful and we need to continue with that success by ensuring that as we look at the industries and businesses that were closed by order, they are working with WorkSafe to make sure there's a framework of guidance for them to proceed that makes sure their customers are comfortable, that makes sure the health officers are comfortable, and that we don't have an influx of patients coming into our acute care system.

Reporter: You guys have said that international travel is off the table for probably a long time to come. What about travel throughout Canada as people start to move around a bit more this summer?

Horgan: Again, I think that the market will decide some of this; if there are no flights there aren't going to be a lot of people getting on planes. If there are people demanding to get on planes, there will be more flights. We want to make sure that's done in a reasonable way. I know that YVR, our major airport in Vancouver has been working over the past number of weeks to find ways to safely operate.

I don't know how many images we've seen during holidays, certainly at Christmas, where airports are packed with people side by side, frustrated at the ticket wicket asking where my flight is, why was it cancelled -- we cannot have that type of behaviour. That is just not going to be on. As we start to see more travel in -- I would suggest probably later in the summer if at all and international travel will be determined by the number of flights and the number of people prepared to get on them. These are personal choices that people will have to make and we're going to support them as best we can by making sure there are guidelines in place for appropriate operations that will keep people safe and allow the economy to continue to restart and grow into the future.

Reporter: Not to belabour the point on timing, but mid-May, I interpret that to mean May 15th. If I'm a restaurant owner, do I have a reasonable expectation I can open my restaurant on May 15th if I make the changes required under the new rules? And secondly, kids' sports came up in the technical briefing - I haven't heard that today and I'm just wondering how you envision kids' sports playing out over the summer.

Horgan: I'll start with the back and work to the front. The BC Parks and Recreation Association has been working to try and find ways that kids' sports and summer camps and all the things that make for an exciting summer for young people can take place, and we're going to be working with them through public health to see if there's a way we can see that happening. There's been talk about professional sports as well -- that's a different discussion that oftentimes involves people in seats. I think a local baseball game, if people are using their own equipment and not sharing. The bat is the bat, but we can try out best to keep the bats clean. I think we'll see what local community organizations come up with, and again, what parents do by showing up with their kids.

On the larger question, we are going to be opening most provincial parks for day use on the 14th of May before the long weekend. Our expectation is that the Restart Plan will kick in on the 19th of May, which is the Tuesday after the long weekend. We wanted to make sure that people had a starting point to start preparing. People have been doing that, we've now given a plan and we understand how we're going to operate.

I'm going to be asking all members of the Legislature to be sounding boards in their communities. The best way for us to receive information is through an MLA's office, so if you're a business that wants more details, contact your MLA. These are going to be challenges for elected representatives, but the non-partisan approach that we've brought to bear -- Minister Dix conducting numerous town halls with opposition members -- to make sure we're giving the public the information they need. We're going to continue doing that in the restart.

Will politics re-emerge in BC? I'm sure it will, but for now we want all members of the Legislature to be the point where companies, small businesses, if they can't get access directly to WorkSafe or public health officials, we can start to set that up. That's one of the roles and functions of MLA

offices, they're non-partisan offices. This is one of the tools we'll use to make sure people can access that information and get their businesses up and running.

Reporter: There have been a lot of infants born in the last couple of months. Families are really eager to share these new family members with loved ones, and I'm just wondering if you can offer some advice for new parents, what they should do in this circumstance. Everyone wants to cuddle those kids. I hope you can give some advice, particularly with Mothers Day on the horizon.

Horgan: Great question.

Henry: It is a great question. It's one of those important events in our lives. Right now we need to hold the line, and we need to keep our circles small. Now is not the time to do that, but we are looking at, come the middle of May, yes, if things continue to go, the risk is low enough in our community.

But these are the decisions you're going to have to make. If you expand your circle, you know you're going to be in contact with their contacts. You need to do it thoughtfully, and you need to understand the risk in your family. We do know infants are at risk of having more severe illness. We know we need to protect them from a whole bunch of things.

Absolutely, spread your circle but be very aware and be very careful. You might have to do it in small steps right now.

Reporter: Your data modelling and your current plans are for people do be doing 60% of normal distancing, or 40% physical distancing. In the fine print it says this data is stable for about four weeks.

What sort of things would cause you to impose more restrictions on social interaction again?

Henry: Just to say that this is modelling, and that's a caveat, because modelling only reflects what's put into it. It is something that helped us come up with the strategies that we're talking about. It's a common sense way. It helps us say okay, if we are between where we are now, and we can essentially double our contacts, then we'll probably be okay. We'll be continuing to follow the models and putting in our data as we go along.

It's not that that's going to predict what's happening. What we need to know is that that gives us a little bit of a sense of what could happen, and how can we increase our social connections and increase our economy and get things moving again, but staying within that safety zone. Really, it's not 61% or 62% or 49%, it's about saying we need to take some measures to increase our numbers of contacts, and the safety of the contacts that we have. That's the way that we can stay in that safe zone.

Reporter: Premier, I'm wondering what your biggest concern is, going forward. Is it making sure that people are going to stay home when sick? Is it to have that backup in place for, as [inaudible] said, people who are working cheque-to-cheque?

Horgan: I have a thousand concerns. I don't put them in a hierarchy. Everyday, all of us have come to work in extraordinary circumstances. Everyday has been a day that we've never experienced before. We've all been doing our best across sectors, across communities, across the country in fact, to try and find a way to bring unity, to bring social cohesion, to ensure the health and wellbeing of all British Columbians and all Canadians. Those are the primary focuses, and that's at the higher level.

When we get down to the basics, I'm concerned that 400,000 British Columbians have applied for the Emergency Worker Benefit program that we've had open for the past five days or six days today. Four-hundred thousand British Columbians are out of work. That's a big challenge. It's going to take time to absorb those workers back into the economy.

The good news is before the pandemic BC had a robust economy, and one of our bigger challenges was finding workers for jobs. I think the future is going to be solid, but we need to make sure that future is focused on public health and ensuring that workplaces are safe for workers, they're safe for customers, and that all British Columbians will benefit, again, from a strong and robust economy. But we are in uncharted territory and every day we try to find the best way forward together. We have the benefit of a superlative public health officer, a very good friend and outstanding Health minister, and a cabinet in a Legislature at the present time that is singularly focused on the best outcomes for British Columbians. That, I don't think, has ever happened before. So we should take some comfort in that.

Reporter: Premier, on schools, what do you say to teachers and parents who are hearing this, nervous about going back? Can you explain to them what these routine daily screenings look like? And for families that are involved in sports, I know Keith asked about this, but more specifically, I'm hearing a lot from hockey players. Do you expect that there will be hockey games played at any point in this year here in BC for kids or even rec league adults?

Horgan: Hockey and other sports, whether they're played in beer leagues or whether it's youth, minor hockey organizations, we're going to be working through that into the fall. We have a season ahead of us for baseball and other summer activities. We're going to be focusing on that first and foremost.

I have written to the head of the NHL as well as the NHL Players' Association to offer BC as a place to potentially restart the NHL, assuming that the games would be played without audiences, but instead will be played for television.

Unfortunately, the BC Lions need to have bums in seats, and I don't see that happening. But we'll be working with the CFL as well, which also creates economic activity within our community.

On the broader issue of going back to school, Rob Fleming has been working with Teri Mooring, the head of the BC Teachers' Federation, with other support workers in the system, with trustees, with parent groups. We want to make sure that we can safely get kids back into classrooms. It's not just about reading, writing and arithmetic. I answered a question from a viewer on one of the television networks yesterday, a young viewer who wanted to get back to school to see her friends. That is a reasonable thing for young people to do.

School is a place of joy for many people. It may not have been for some, but it is a place of joy for young people, and they want to get back to it. But we want to make sure that's done safely and we don't want anyone to feel that they're obliged to.

We've seen virtual learning taking place over the past number of weeks. Positive outcomes there, but it's not perfect. We want to make sure we do a dry run between the beginning of June to the end of June. We're not anticipating any increase in in-class teaching until well after the May long weekend, but Minister Fleming and I will be having more to say about that probably later next week or perhaps after the long weekend.

But what I'm hearing from people is are there concerns? Absolutely. But there is also an overwhelming desire to get back to a place where we can have kids interacting with each other, learning about not just how to read, how to write and how to count, but also how to interact with other people. This brings up the issue I raised earlier about racism in BC.

Our social interactions in our schools, multicultural schools, where there are people from around the world. There's a school district in Burnaby. One hundred and nine languages are spoken in one of the schools in Edmonds in Burnaby. That is an outstanding thing to talk about, and that is the type of BC that we all want to see. People working together in harmony, enjoying living in one of the greatest places on the planet.

School is a vital part of that. We're not going to force anyone, but we're working with all of the various stakeholders, and they're numerous. Everyone has got a common purpose, and that's to make sure that we can get kids back into classrooms in a safe manner as soon as possible, but in fact I know we won't see full participation until September, if at that time. Long answer.

Thanks, everybody.