

Date:	January 13, 2021
To:	Northern Health Physicians
From:	Dr Ronald Chapman, VP Medicine
Re:	Update on FNHA / NH COVID-19 Collaborative Immunization Plan

This memo outlines the collaborative approach the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and Northern Health (NH) will use to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine across First Nations and non-First Nations communities in Northern BC.

Approximately 2400 people have been immunized with the first shipments of vaccine allocated to Northern Health (1950 doses of Pfizer and 900 doses of Moderna). A further 975 doses of Pfizer have arrived this week. Northern Health has received confirmation of the vaccine supply for the North to the end of January, and we expect further vaccine to be made available in February and March both for second doses as well as for expansion of the immunization plan.

The immunization plan developed by NH and FNHA focuses on the priorities outlined in the Ministry of Health's phased priorities for immunization over the next three months, and also places priority on Northern rural, remote, and First Nations communities particularly impacted as the pandemic has progressed.

The Ministry of Health's priorities for the next three months are:

- People living in long-term care and assisted living environments
- Initially, physicians and health care workers in long-term care and assisted living; those providing direct patient care in high-priority units within acute care facilities; and paramedics. The goal is to provide access to the vaccine for all hospital- and community-based health care workers by the end of March.
- Long-term home support recipients
- Community members over age 80
- Residents/clients in select congregate settings (e.g., group homes, correctional facilities, mental health residential care, shelters)
- Along with these priorities, the FNHA's overarching goal is to work towards immunization of all adults over age 18 in First Nations communities, with an initial focus on elders and those over age 65, and all adults in more remote and isolated First Nations communities, as the vaccine supply permits.
- Physicians and health care workers serving First Nations communities.

The FNHA and NH plan was designed to incrementally address these priorities over the next three months as the vaccine supply arrives.

The FNHA and NH have started immunizing priority groups in these following communities:

Community	Organization	Vaccine
Prince George	NH	Pfizer
Terrace LTC and AL & some HCW at MMH	NH	Moderna
Fort Nelson and First Nations north of Fort St. John	NH	Moderna

Lakes District communities	NH	Pfizer
Tahltan Telegraph Creek	FNHA	Moderna
Iskut	FNHA	Moderna
Gitxaala	FNHA	Moderna
Gitga'at	FNHA	Moderna
Kwadacha	FNHA	Moderna
Tsay Keh Dene	FNHA	Moderna
Takla	FNHA	Moderna
Lax Kw'alaams	FNHA	Moderna

We appreciate the demand and sense of urgency for this immunization program to be available in all communities across Northern BC. We will be balancing the need to move quickly as the vaccine becomes available with the need to deliver this immunization program safely and effectively, particularly given the complexity of the vaccines we will be using in this phase of the plan. Because there are many variables that may change the plan, and updates are expected, a website link to the high-level description of the detailed plan will be provided to you shortly.

As with any plan, there will be factors such as logistical challenges and particular epidemiological or community needs that may necessitate some alterations or adjustments as implementation progresses over the next three months.

We understand that there are a number of physicians and health care providers who are interested in supporting the delivery of the immunization program. This is very encouraging, and we will be providing a way for this interest to be formally registered in the coming week. This will become even more critical as we enter the population-based immunization program later in the spring.

Lastly, we are aware that there continues to be vaccine hesitancy on the part of many health care workers and members of the general public. The leadership that you provide in promoting the vaccine as safe and effective is invaluable. If you have ideas or advice about how we can overcome vaccine hesitancy among staff and members of the public and promote immunization, we would be pleased to receive these by forwarding to covid-19@northernhealth.ca.

While this immunization program progresses, it is still critical that we continue to follow the infection prevention and control practices, PPE protocols, and hand hygiene and physical distancing directives that have been in place over the last 10 months.

This has been a challenging and difficult time for the health care system, and the physicians and health care providers who provide care and services. We value your continued diligence and commitment and appreciate your patience as we implement this new immunization program across the region.