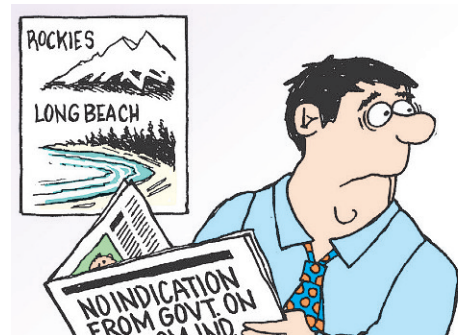


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COMMENT

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HOME SWEET, TINY HOME



Resident Darren Heap in his room shortly after arriving at the tiny-home village on Caledonia Avenue on Friday: "I have a place over my head and now I can actually move forward in my life." DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

Neighbours greet residents of new village with flowers, cookies and window signs

ROXANNE EGAN-ELLIOTT
Times Colonist

As new residents moved into a tiny-home village near Royal Athletic Park on Friday, a sign in a house window just down the street offered an enthusiastic welcome.

"Welcome to North Park tiny home neighbours!" said the sign in Katie Fillion's window.

Fillion said she got to know some of the people who lived in tents in the parking lot across from her home over the winter and she knew they didn't always feel welcome in the neighbourhood.

With 30 new neighbours expected to move in across the street in the next few days, Fillion wanted to make sure they felt part of the community.

"I wanted them to know that they're part of our neighbourhood now and that they're really, really welcome here," she said.

People are expected to continue moving in over the weekend, with all 30 units to be occupied by Monday, said Grant McKenzie, communications director for Our Place Society, which is managing the tiny-home village.

Others have also stopped by to welcome the new residents, dropping off flowers and freshly baked cookies, McKenzie said.

Darren Heap, who moved into his unit Friday, said that after sheltering in Beacon Hill Park, his new home felt like a five-star hotel.

See VILLAGE, page A2



A welcome sign at Katie Fillion's house near the tiny-home village.



Workers check in resident Heap, far right, after his arrival at the village.

U.S. cruise ships a step closer to bypassing Victoria

Times Colonist

The U.S. Senate has given unanimous consent to temporarily allow Alaska-bound cruise ships to bypass Victoria and Vancouver ports in an attempt to salvage a listing cruise-ship industry and provide a much-needed economic boost to struggling Alaskan communities that depend on the vessels.

The Alaska Tourism Recovery Act, brought by Alaskan senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, could go to the U.S. House of Representatives for approval as early as next week. It would then require a signature from U.S. President Joe Biden, and cruise companies would need to follow a return-to-sail program overseen by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ian Robertson, chief executive of the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, said Friday he has been watching the proceedings unfold in Washington. He noted the U.S. legislation is temporary until the U.S.-Canada border opens. Canada has banned cruise ships until Feb. 28, 2022.

"I'm not losing a tremendous amount of sleep over it," said Robertson.

"The cruise lines like coming to Victoria, and it's a key part of their itinerary out of Seattle. Right now, there's not much we can do about it, other than focus on the 2022 [cruise] season and operate the properties we have like Fisherman's Wharf and the Inner Harbour causeway."

The new legislation would suspend the Passenger Vessel Services Act, a U.S. law that requires all non-U.S.-flagged vessels, such as most cruise ships, to stop in a foreign port such as Victoria before arriving in Alaska.

A statement from B.C.'s Tourism Ministry on Friday said the U.S. legislation is clear that the changes would be automatically rescinded when Canadian ports are reopened to cruise ships.

"This means that as soon as Canadian ports are ready to welcome cruise ships again, they will be required by U.S. law to stop here on their way to Alaska, even if the current bill becomes law," said the statement.

It added that Premier John Horgan has asked to meet with Alaska senators in coming weeks on the matter.

The *Anchorage Daily News* reported Murkowski telling the Senate: "This has been a struggle to get everyone pulling together, but I think we are at a place where there is a glimmer of hope for Alaska's tourism industry."

Charlie Ball, an executive vice-president for Holland America Group, the largest of the big-ship companies operating in Alaska, told the *Anchorage* newspaper the company remains "optimistic that we can still operate some portion of our Alaska season."

Canada and the U.S. banned cruise ships last year during the pandemic.

The *Anchorage Daily News* said large cruise ships would take time to begin sailing, pointing to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's safety program and preparation to market cruises, assemble crews and position ships.
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'Catastrophic' water crisis on Oregon-California border >B7

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‘Restart 2.0’ in the works — maybe



LES LEYNE

There were mixed signals this week about whether the tougher COVID-19 restrictions over the past six weeks will be relaxed in 10 days time.

The measures to short-circuit the pandemic's third wave were announced March 29. Some have already been extended once and others were imposed later. They expire on May 25, but could easily be extended again.

Officials are unhappy with the current case count, but encouraged by the growing vaccination rate, which now tops 50 per cent of those eligible.

The overall pandemic profile since the restrictions were imposed has changed significantly in B.C. The number of new cases has declined.

Health Minister Adrian Dix said Thursday it's moving in the right direction, but “let's face it, 500 to 600 cases a day is still way too high.”

It dipped below 500 on Friday.

There were 387 people hospitalized with COVID-19 as of Friday, down about 100 from the early-April peak, but Dix said that, too, is “still way too high.”

It's still about 100 patients higher than when the tougher measures were imposed on March 29. ICU counts are also higher.

The hospital numbers were a key factor in the decision to tighten restrictions, as

concerns arose that they couldn't handle what was called at the time an “exponential growth” in the number of cases.

Even with the case rate dropping, Dix said more than 1,000 surgeries in Metro Vancouver have been cancelled recently to preserve beds for potential COVID-19 patients. There are still vacant beds ready, but in the Fraser and Vancouver Coast health authorities, surge beds are now in use, meaning the base capacity there is full.

On the plus side, another 1.5 million people have been vaccinated since the end of March. The vaccination rate was 14 per cent when the short circuit effort was announced. It's now 51.5 per cent and tens of thousands are getting shots each day.

But figures released this week show the various vaccines are not magic bullets. Provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry said B.C. has recorded 1,340 cases of COVID-19 in people who were vaccinated, 30 of whom died.

The figures confirm the vaccines vastly reduce the risk. But they don't eliminate it.

The storyline has taken some turns. The negative indicators all continued climbing for two weeks after the measures were announced.

The first measures included the shutdown of Whistler, a renewed ban on indoor restaurant dining imposed with only a half-day notice, and restricted indoor religious services and some gym activities.

As the cases grew, recommendations against non-essential travel were converted to formal orders. The indoor restaurant shutdown was originally to last for three weeks, but was later extended to May 25. An expensive relief package was announced to help the hospitality industry.

Even with the short-circuit measures, about 37,000 new cases have developed

in the six weeks since they were first announced, and there have been 176 more deaths.

The peak of the third wave of the pandemic was reached on April 14, when the rolling seven-day average number of cases topped 1,100 a day.

It has since subsided to under 600.

The third wave more or less derailed a “restart” effort that got underway last spring and summer, when cases ebbed. Officials announced they were stepping back from it in November, after sustained growth in the case rate.

On Thursday, Henry referred to “restart 2.0,” saying work is underway on what it might look like.

“Expect to start seeing that after the May long weekend in more detail. I'm working with my colleagues across the country to make sure we are all aligned in some of the messaging we're giving.”

That signal suggests the restrictions will start lifting in some fashion, even with the unease about the continued high case count.

Henry also told people to stay tuned for information on celebrating graduation ceremonies safely this spring.

The orders could simply expire or be amended. The bans on indoor restaurant dining and non-essential travel between regions are among the highest-profile restrictions.

They could also be adjusted on a regional basis. Henry issued social-gathering orders specific to Vancouver Coastal and Fraser health authorities in November and shut down Whistler this spring.

It's encouraging to hear the word “restart” again, but its extent will depend on next week's numbers.

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China lands spacecraft on Mars for first time

BEIJING — China landed a spacecraft on Mars for the first time today, state media said.

Plans call for a rover to stay in the lander for a few days of diagnostic tests before rolling down a ramp to explore an icy area of Mars known as Utopia Planitia. It will join an American rover that arrived at the red planet in February.

China's first Mars landing follows its launch last month of the main section of what will be a permanent space station and a mission that brought back rocks from the moon late last year.

“China has left a footprint on Mars for the first time, an important step for our country's space exploration,” the official Xinhua News Agency said in announcing the landing. — AP

220 people expected to move indoors by next week

> FROM A1: VILLAGE

“I have a place over my head and now I can actually move forward in my life. Maybe I can get a job and move in that direction. You know, get my life together basically,” he said, as he unpacked in his new space.

Guy, another new resident, was feeling grateful to have a home just a couple of weeks after he started a part-time job washing cars. Before getting the keys to his tiny home, he slept on the sidewalk, in doorways and in abandoned buildings, always moving from place to place.

“I'm going to start biting my tongue more and swallowing my pride, because I don't want to lose these things,” he said.

The project, built with shipping containers, is the result of a collaboration between Aryze Developments and the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, which launched a crowdfunding campaign that raised \$550,000 from 580 citizens and business in three months.

Melanie Ransome, marketing and communications manager for Aryze, said it was “spectacular” to see community members come together to fund the project.

“What is a better way to see that folks support a project than for them to actually donate their own money to fund it?” she said. “It's pretty amazing to witness.”

Mayor Lisa Helps said it's the first time in the city's history that residents have come together to build housing for their neighbours.

“I think that sends a good message. You know, if you're moving in out of somewhere, out of a tent, and you're being welcomed with welcome arms into a neighbourhood, that sets a different tone than if there's a lot of pushback or resistance,” she said.

B.C. Housing said as of Thursday, 191 people who had been sheltering in parks had moved indoors. With the opening of the tiny homes, they anticipate 220 people will have moved indoors by next week, which is the number of people they counted sheltering in Victoria parks early this year. Most of the indoor spaces secured by the province are now occupied or in the process of being occupied.

B.C. Housing said there are still people unhoused in the city, and outreach workers continue to visit parks daily to help people fill out supportive housing applications. All-day camping in city parks is no longer permitted.

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Fortin leaves vaccine rollout post as he faces military investigation

The Canadian Press

OTTAWA — The officer in charge of Canada's COVID-19 vaccine rollout has left his assignment with the Public Health Agency of Canada pending the results of a military investigation.

The Department of National Defence said in a statement Friday that Maj.-Gen. Dany Fortin

is off the high-profile job. There was no information released about the nature of the investigation.

The statement said acting chief of the defence staff, Lt.-Gen. Wayne Eyre, will be reviewing next steps with Fortin.

Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan said in an email statement: “As I have stated previously, I am committed to working to build a true culture of inclusion for the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We are committed to this lasting change — one that sheds toxic and outdated values, practices, and policies.”

“The Acting Chief of Defence Staff has advised me that MGen Fortin has stepped aside. As there is an ongoing investigation, I will have no further comment at this time.”

Sajjan said the Canadian Armed Forces continues to fully support the vaccine rollout and the rest of the government's response to COVID-19 across Canada. The Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Minister Patty Hajdu's office refused to comment on the impact of Fortin's departure on the vaccine campaign.

Last November, Fortin was appointed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to oversee what he called the “greatest mobilization effort Canada has seen since the Second World War.”

Fortin has served in the military for almost 30 years. He commanded NATO's training mission in Iraq and led Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan at the height of the fiercest fighting there.

Farnworth aims to stop ‘scourge’ of gang violence

NICK WELLS and DIRK MEISSNER
The Canadian Press

Police have mounted an all-out, joint effort to end the “scourge” of gang violence in Metro Vancouver that has seen deadly shootings in public places in recent weeks, says B.C. Solicitor General Mike Farnworth.

Farnworth said Friday, a day after meeting with top police officials, that they assured him they would use all available tools to end gang violence.

“They are absolutely committed to suppressing this cycle of violence,” he told a news conference from his home in Port Coquitlam. “This is job No. 1. This is their top priority.”

He made the comments just hours after another public shooting that left one person dead and two hurt in the parking lot of a busy shopping area in Burnaby.

Integrated Homicide Investigation Team spokesman Sgt. Frank Jang said Friday that all three people were believed to be the targets of the shooting.

The deceased, Jaskeert Kalkat, 23, was known to be affiliated with gang activity, Jang said. The two people injured, a man and a woman in their 20s, were in hospital with serious injuries.

“They wage war on us, the community, and all that is decent about our community when they open fire in North Langley at a skating complex where there's a daycare, putting young children and parents in danger,” Jang said. There have been 11 shoot-

ings in the Lower Mainland in less than a month, seven of them deadly and many in public places, including shopping centre parking lots, outside restaurants and outside the international departure terminal at Vancouver's airport.

Three fatal shootings have occurred in the past week, two in Burnaby. Police have laid a first-degree murder charge in the death of a man in Burnaby on Saturday.

On Sunday, an RCMP officer in a police cruiser caught up with a getaway vehicle in the airport shooting, but suspended the chase when someone fired shots, hitting the police vehicle.

Farnworth said police chiefs told him the RCMP, municipal forces and gang, homicide and crime units are working together to “deal with this scourge that is taking place right now. These gangsters, there's only two ways this is going to end. It's either jail or they're dead. If they're dead, they're not mourned by anybody but their family because they're forgotten by everybody else.”

A joint statement released Friday and signed by a dozen police leaders said the partnership with policing agencies in the region on the gang-violence issue is unprecedented. The statement said an intelligence-led enforcement effort is underway, which includes overt and covert operations, targeting people who pose the highest risk to public safety and increasing interaction with those involved in gangs.

Mobility scooter hit on highway

An elderly man was treated in hospital for injuries suffered when his mobility scooter was hit by a pickup truck on the Trans-Canada Highway in Ladysmith on Thursday.

The incident happened about 3 p.m. when the man was crossing the highway from Ludlow Road to 1st Avenue. The pickup was turning left from Ludlow onto the highway. — Times Colonist

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9:00 am	3:00 pm	9:00 pm
11:00 am	5:00 pm	
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❖ 5:15 am	12:45 pm	● 8:15 pm
❖ 7:45 am	3:15 pm	● 10:45 pm
10:15 am	5:45 pm	
LEAVE TSAWWASSEN		
❖ 5:15 am	12:45 pm	● 8:15 pm
❖ 7:45 am	3:15 pm	● 10:45 pm
10:15 am	5:45 pm	
❖ Except Sun.		● Except Sat.
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LEAVE DEPARTURE BAY		
6:15 am	1:00 pm	8:45 pm
8:25 am	3:20 pm	
10:40 am	5:55 pm	
LEAVE HORSESHOE BAY		
6:15 am	1:00 pm	10:10 pm
8:25 am	3:45 pm	
10:40 am	6:35 pm	
BRENTWOOD BAY – MILL BAY		
LEAVE BRENTWOOD BAY		
❖ 7:30 am	11:00 am	3:35 pm
8:40 am	1:15 pm	4:45 pm
9:50 am	2:25 pm	5:55 pm
LEAVE MILL BAY		
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