

**Fasten your seatbelts:** We may be in for a bumpy ride over the next few weeks as the number of new cases of the fast-spreading COVID-19 Omicron variant increases dramatically every day — here, across Canada and around the world.

In BC, more than 80% of the new COVID-19 cases are Omicron now and Dr. Bonnie Henry (Provincial Health Officer) has said several times that it's likely we will all be exposed to it at some point.

Of course that doesn't mean we will all become ill, but at a briefing today, Dr. Henry said that up to 1/3 of BC's workforce could become ill.

If that happens, many people will have to stay home from work until they are well enough to be safely back on the job.

That's going to have an impact on all our services at a time when staffing levels are already stretched.

So we need to be prepared for interruptions to **all** our services, including our ferry services.

If our ferry services are affected, it's critical that our essential service providers have priority access to the ferry services that are available.

**Protect yourself and avoid frustration:** If you don't have to leave the island over the next few weeks, please stay home; if you do have to leave the island, please be prepared for sailing delays and possible cancellations.

But if you can, just stay home until we're through this Omicron "tsunami" — aided and abetted by the storms and snow.

It'll keep you and our community safer and it'll reduce the pressure on those providing the essential services we rely on. It'll help keep those service providers safer too.

**One more important step:** Protect yourself and others against Omicron by wearing a three-layer mask that is comfortable and fits snugly.