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October 17, 2014

To all British Columbian health care workers:

As Health Minister, I want to give you an update on the work we are doing to help prepare for the very low possibility of a case of Ebola occurring in BC.

I am aware of the concerns health care workers have regarding our preparedness. I have read your letters, and I know that many of you are anxious about the safety of your patients and your fellow workers, particularly with the news from Dallas and Spain of the spread of the Ebola virus to health care workers. I share those concerns.

Because of these concerns, I have created a co-ordinating task force, co-chaired by Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, and my Associate Deputy Minister, Lynn Stevenson, that will ensure that information and best practices are shared across all health authorities.

Rest assured that we are addressing, as a priority, equipment needs, training needs and preparedness, and updating clinical information on how best to provide treatment and follow-up. The task force is reviewing the training in all health authorities to ensure it is being applied consistently across the province and based on the current national guidelines. This will be focused on those health care workers who will be treating a patient, in the unlikely event that a person is diagnosed with Ebola in BC.

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, BC will review and update our protocols. 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.

To be clear, most health care staff will not have to have contact with any suspected or confirmed Ebola patient, but it is important to be aware of the protocols in place to deal with a suspected Ebola case. Your health authority will be providing more information on that in the coming days.

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Finally, I want to thank you for your dedication and hard work to provide health care to British Columbians and protecting the public from the spread of all infectious diseases.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Terry Lake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "T".

Terry Lake
Minister