

North Saanich Council COVID-19 Message #2

April 8, 2020

Thank you for taking time to read this second COVID-19 message. Our efforts are meant to complement information available on the District, Provincial, and Federal websites.

We are grateful that residents of North Saanich are doing their part to halt further transmission of the COVID-19.

We encouraged you to sign up for email notifications and you responded with enthusiasm! The number of subscribers has doubled; our new target is 500. Help us reach our goal by sharing this message and the link [sign up for email notifications](#) with your family, friends and neighbours.

District staff have settled into more of a routine as they adjust to the COVID-19 crisis. Approximately 50% of inside staff are working remotely and outside staff have adjusted work schedules to ensure sufficient essential service coverage. The Emergency Operations Centre personnel have shifted to three days a week from five now that the workload has stabilized.

The [District's COVID19 page](#) has additional information and resource links.

Health & Safety

Many of us have now been in isolation for many weeks, and we now know that this could continue for many more. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau continues to reinforce that “above all, stay home”. It is more important than ever that we find ways to stay healthy, physically and mentally.

We recognize that this is a natural time of year where many of us are busy in our yards cleaning up, pruning, planting gardens and producing lots of materials to dispose of.

As part of the State of Emergency, the Province of BC has banned all open air burning until April 15th. The ban is likely to be extended. Many of you are also aware that the District's green waste facility is closed for the foreseeable future. Only a few regional facilities still accept yard and garden waste. The CRD has compiled a list at [CRD Yard and Garden Facility List](#). You might also consider renting or borrowing a chipper for the woody material. Thank you for figuring out a way to manage this on your property for the short term.

If you're new to gardening here are a few helpful resources:

- The [Compost Education Centre](#) has a wide range of resources online. You can also call their hotline at 250-386-9676 Wed-Sat 10-4.

- This article from [Edible Landscapes Design](#) includes information on growing sprouts and edible weeds and wild greens.
- Food Eco District is giving away 500 food garden kits (planters, soil, seeds, and instructions). [My FED Farm](#)
- Lastly, there is a lot of expertise in North Saanich; we encourage you to ask around. Feel free to message us for suggestions.

Now is also a vital time to support our local farmers. Many residents have reduced trips to the larger grocery stores by shopping at farm stands and local retail markets. Several places are even delivering food boxes!

- To view an interactive map of businesses that are open, including a number of farms visit [San Pen Chamber of Commerce Open Businesses](#)
- You can also find an extensive list of farms on the Peninsula at [Island Farm Fresh website - Peninsula](#)
- The Province has deemed farmers markets an essential service. The North Saanich Farm Market is working on finding ways to comply with the new guidelines, and are aiming for a June 6th opening.
- Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR) is mounting a response and looking at ways to support farmers in the region.

Economy & Local Business

The economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis is significant and the future is uncertain. Federal and Provincial health orders designed to “flatten the curve” have forced many small and medium sized businesses to close temporarily or reinvent themselves in order to offer their services and products in a different way. Many of your local Peninsula favourites are still open in some capacity. We encourage you to visit the Peninsula Chamber link above and support local businesses if you are able.

Council held a Budget meeting on Monday April 6th and considered a staff report that addressed a revised 2020 Budget and also the potential impact of the COVID-19 health crisis. After a good discussion Council approved the 2020-2024 Financial Plan which will see an average tax increase of 1.9% for business properties and 3.29% for residential properties. Council also approved deferral of a \$50 water infrastructure replacement tax increase to 2021 and an additional \$50 in 2022. The average residential property will see a \$41 increase in municipal taxes this year.

Council also agreed to waive utility fee late payment penalties for the February 24, 2020 billing cycle and extend the payment deadline of the early June billing from July 31 to September 30, 2020. In recognition of the potential for unanticipated costs and uncertainty related to COVID-19 impacts, Council agreed to transfer an additional \$200,000 from unallocated surplus to the Contingency reserve fund.

Building Community

Our hope is that you are staying well connected to your family, friends and neighbours, and are finding new ways to do so. For many the upcoming Easter long weekend is typically a time for family brunches and dinners, general get-togethers, and the warmth and closeness of near and extended family. We encourage you to celebrate virtually or create new traditions. We also want to let the children know that the Easter Bunny has been deemed an essential service, has adequate protective gear, and may still be able to visit and deliver treats.

Now more than ever we need to reach out and connect. Is there a neighbour you've not yet met? You might consider introducing yourself by way of a written note dropped off to introduce yourself and provide your contact details.

North Saanich parks and trails (excluding playgrounds, tennis courts and pickleball courts) remain open; please maintain physical distancing which will allow us all to continue to enjoy these amenities. The Parks and Trails booklet can be found here: [Parks and Trails Booklet](#). Fresh air and exercise are great medicine.

Has your neighbourhood joined the 7 pm cheer movement? We encourage you to make some noise at 7 pm – banging pots, whistling, clapping, singing, playing an instrument— as a show of support for those on the frontline who are working so hard to ensure that all of us are well cared for. Evidence suggests that they are heartened by this demonstration of thanks.

We recently heard the story of an Ardmore resident, a frontline health care worker who was greeted with a cheer from her neighbours upon returning home from a long shift. So moved by the encouragement, she in turn gifted each neighbour with a maple seedling. Do you have a 'good news' story to share? We'd love to hear it.



The '*hearts in the window*' movement is taking off around the world, spreading warmth and good cheer to neighbors and passersby. We encourage you to display something heart shaped in your window to lift the spirits of those in your neighbourhood.

We thank Emma and her Mom, Councillor Patricia Pearson, for lifting the spirits of our hard-working North Saanich staff.

Councillor Pearson will join MLA Adam Olsen on FB Live Wednesday April 8th at 7:15pm

You can join, and ask questions here:

<https://www.facebook.com/Olsen4MLA>

Many of you are wondering about practical ways that you can be of assistance during this time. Donations to the Saanich Peninsula Lions Food Bank have hit an all time low while demand continues to grow in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please consider donating online <http://splfoodbank.com/donate> or by phone 250-655-0679. The Food Bank relies solely on the generosity of residents and businesses. Thank you for your support in helping to ensure that everyone in our community continues to be fed.

This is a very challenging time for every one of us, and we do need to be united as a community. We are very grateful that our residents are making so many sacrifices in the interest of the greater good to protect all of us, and particularly the most vulnerable in our community. Thank you, all.

We will get through this, and we thank you for the part you are playing to make it so.

As always, you are welcome to contact any one of us.

Sincerely,

Mayor Geoff Orr and Councillors Heather Gartshore, Jack McClintock, Patricia Pearson, Brett Smyth, Celia Stock, Murray Weisenberger

Appendix: Additional Resources

For the Young Ones:

Eight local artists have created a free [Nature Activity Book](#) that you can download for free (and print at home)

The Kids Help Phone: <https://kidshelpphone.ca>

Kids Art Kits: <https://mctavishacademy.ca/kids-creative-kits/>

[Stop animation lego video](#) produced by Tyler Walsh and family (Manitoba).

Health:

Are you a senior and need support or want to offer support? Register for the Safe Seniors, Strong Communities program - **call 211 or visit <http://www.bc211.ca/>**

Chief Medical Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry mentioned [Bounceback](#), a free evidence-based program designed to help youth and adults experiencing symptoms of mild to moderate depression, low mood or stress, with or without anxiety.

A group of registered and insured BC counsellors are offering free online counselling for those who can't access mental health services at this time. You can connect with them at bccovidtherapists@gmail.com

Business:

UBCM COVID-19 Outreach and Advocacy [UBCM April 3 News](#)

Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce: [COVID-19 Community Updates](#)

BC Chamber of Commerce: [Resources for Businesses Affected by COVID-19](#)

Sidney Business Improvement Area Society:

[COVID-19 \(Corona Virus\) Update](#)

Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB):

[COVID-19 Small Business Help Centre](#)

South Island Prosperity Partnership [COVID-19 Resources](#)