

North Saanich Council COVID-19 Message

March 30, 2020

As your elected officials we appreciate that these are uncertain times and that you may be feeling anxious, fearful, vulnerable and worried. Please know that District employees are working hard on your behalf and have taken steps to ensure that all of us will emerge from this evolving COVID-19 crisis ready and able to rebuild and move forward together. Council is so grateful and truly appreciates the dedication of staff during the crisis.

Our plan going forward is to provide you with a weekly Council message and a mid-week video message.

To access important contact information and resources please visit the [District's COVID19 page](#).

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/>**

Health & Safety

As your local government we are responsible for governance, provision of services, stewardship of assets, and fostering the economic, social and environmental well-being of our community. During this COVID-19 crisis the provision of services and the well-being of the community are of primary importance.

We activated our Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) on March 16th. The purpose of the EOC is to gather data and make decisions to protect life and property, maintain business continuity where possible, and share information. The North Saanich EOC is operating at Level 1, whereas Sidney and Central Saanich have moved to Level 2 (due to higher density residential and commercial areas and the existence of numerous senior care homes – a vulnerable demographic). Council does not have an active role in EOC Level 1 operations.

The District is working closely with the Town of Sidney, District of Central Saanich and other local governments in the region to coordinate municipal and emergency service delivery. We are also in daily communication with Island Health, Emergency Management BC and the Province. Mayor Geoff Orr participates in a weekly conference call with Minister Selina Robinson, Municipal Affairs and Housing and CAO Tim Tanton communicates with Peninsula and Regional CAO's many times each week.

Individually we must all follow the Provincial Health recommendations:

- Wash hands frequently for 20s in lukewarm water.
- Sneeze or cough into a flexed elbow or tissue.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Practice physical distancing (2 metres or 6 feet)

We would like to thank residents for abiding by the provincial health recommendations and physically distancing themselves from others, particularly at local stores, in parks and on trails. We encourage everyone to continue practising the physical distancing recommendations.

It is critical that we all do our best to stay healthy and stay home. In addition to the Provincial Health recommendations mentioned above, here are some ways to take care of yourself and others:

- Seek credible information via local and national news channels and websites hosted by the Government of Canada, BC Government and Island Health. Be mindful of the time you spend focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Eat healthy and exercise
- Take time to maintain your mental health
- Stay socially connected and reach out to neighbours and community members who may be vulnerable.
- Seek help when needed and support others if you can

Economy & Local Business

We recognize the critical role that local businesses play in fuelling our local, regional and provincial economy. We also acknowledge the important role front line health care, emergency and essential service employees play in keeping all of us healthy and safe. There is no question that the current COVID-19 crisis is putting enormous strain on our collective physical and mental health and economic resilience.

Measures introduced by the Province and Federal Government over the past two weeks have provided welcome relief for both business and individuals. A sample of the most recent announcements include: emergency bank account loans, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) loan guarantees, specific tax relief, wage subsidy, and work share program. Business owners and employees are encouraged to visit any one of a number of different websites to find out current and comprehensive information.

We are working closely with Sidney and Central Saanich to ensure a coordinated approach. We are pleased that the Sidney EOC has seconded Denny Warner, Executive Director, Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce and Morgan Shaw, Executive Director, Sidney Business Improvement Area Society to represent the interests of Peninsula businesses.

Building Community

We really encourage you to be in touch (but not literally!) with your family, friends and neighbours at this time – both near and far. Everyone will be experiencing the required physical distancing measures differently, and there are many ways to be apart while staying connected.

Tried and true favourites such as a landline and mail never go out of style; who doesn't enjoy receiving a phone call or a letter from an old friend? Think about your neighbours, and reach out to anyone who you think might be having a more difficult time.

As Health Minister Adrian Dix said on Saturday, we are now really living in a virtual world—but that doesn't mean we can't be connected. Perhaps now IS the time to brush up on your computer skills - consider joining Facebook as a way to connect online. Learn how video chats work using apps such as FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, Houseparty, etc. We know that our residents are connecting this way and enjoying coffee, happy hour, playing games, reading stories to children and catching up after a long absence. We need to stay connected while we are apart.

Are you the keeper of a neighbourhood email list? Now might be a good time to send a note out to check in with your neighbours and determine if there are any needs that might be met locally. Neighbourhood Facebook Groups are another way that residents are staying connected.

Our parks and trails are still open; we encourage you to use them and check out areas of the District you haven't previously visited. Fresh air and exercise are good for all of us, but please be mindful of the physical distancing requirements.

We are thinking of the families in our community who have school age children as this week, they would normally be returning to their classrooms. Learning will look a little different for the next while and you can expect to hear from your child's school this week, if you haven't already.

We need to be united as a community. Council thanks you for doing your part to protect all of us, particularly the vulnerable in our community. If you haven't already please visit the District website to [sign up for email notifications](#) of breaking news and important announcements.

Please feel free to contact any of us should you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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