



Island Health, BC Housing, Coalition to End Homelessness, the City of Victoria Implement Measures for COVID-19 and Vulnerable Populations in Victoria

Date: Friday, March 20, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – BC Housing, Island Health, the Coalition to End Homelessness and the City of Victoria have been working hard to develop an emergency response for the people who are most vulnerable, living outside, and unable to follow any of Provincial Medical Health Officer Dr. Henry's orders – social distancing, stay at home, wash your hands.

"Island Health welcomes this opportunity to work with our community partners to blunt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on some of our most vulnerable citizens," said Dr. Richard Stanwick, Island Health Medical Officer.

BC Housing

BC Housing serves some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, many of whom have higher rates of health concerns and may be at greater risk if exposed to COVID-19. We are assisting homelessness service providers with their preparations, prevention measures and response plans. We are working with the Ministry of Health, local health authorities, municipalities, service providers and other partners to develop and implement plans for vulnerable communities, including people experiencing homelessness. These plans include determining safe spaces where people can self-isolate. We are looking at solutions across the province, including in Victoria, to provide safe venues for those in need during the COVID-19 crisis. Specific details will be shared with communities once venues are secured and plans finalized.

In addition, the Province has extended the Emergency Weather Protocol until the end of June 2020 in order to maintain shelter space and staffing levels that would otherwise end at the end of March, 2020.

Island Health

Island Health will play a role in assessing people's health and symptoms at the assessment sites and will also identify health care staff to ensure health care professionals are available to support shelter sites. BC Housing and Island health are working in partnership to ensure that there are spaces for self-isolation for those exhibiting symptoms.

The Coalition to End Homelessness

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness is playing a coordinating and communication role to ensure community members are aware of their emerging options for shelter, services, and health inquiries. The Coalition has set up a temporary station in Centennial Square to provide health information and meals.

The City of Victoria

The City of Victoria has asked that the Province use its powers under the Emergency Management Act to order that City facilities be used for the provision of services by BC Housing and Island Health. The Province has granted BC Housing the powers it requires to use City facilities for sheltering.

Capital Regional District

The CRD is leveraging existing and new emergency funding announced by the Government of Canada through the Reaching Home Program to support this important effort.

More details will be released as they come available.

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