



City of Victoria COVID-19 Update

Date: Monday, March 30, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Victoria City Council continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and explore ways to support the community.

Today's federal announcement included more information about the major wage subsidy for business and non-profits. All businesses are eligible if revenue has decreased by 30 per cent due to COVID-19 and there is no size limitation on eligibility; businesses of all sizes are eligible. The federal government will provide 75 per cent of the salary on the first \$58,700 an employee earns. The program is retroactive to March 15.

On Friday, the provincial government announced funding for arts and culture. The new \$3 million Arts and Culture Resilience Supplement will be administered by the BC Arts Council. Those eligible will receive a supplement of up to \$15,000 in early April to help them pay their bills.

Starting in April, the BC Arts Council will also provide eligible organizations a 50 per cent advance on 2020-2021 funding to help with cash flow. They are also extending deadlines and allowing organizations to use the funding to cover immediate needs such as rent and utilities.

"Small business, non-profits and the arts and culture sector are areas that Council has been advocating for relief. I'd like to thank the federal and provincial governments for providing assistance to these important sectors in this challenging time," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "There is still more to do and rent relief for the business and non-profit sector would be a next good step."

The City continues to work with partners on the provision of temporary shelter for vulnerable populations. The Phase One shelter and service sites that are being put in place at Topaz and Royal Athletic Parks are temporary stopgap measures to ensure social distancing is possible.

"The current situation on Pandora Avenue does not enable people to follow Dr. Bonnie Henry's orders," added Mayor Helps. "As we said last week, the temporary park sites were chosen due to their proximity to washrooms, appropriate space for social distancing, and because some people were already sheltering there."

Phase Two, which will be underway soon, will move people from temporarily sheltering in parks to indoor shelters. "The move has already started. Over the weekend, 27 motel rooms were filled with people who had been sleeping outdoors, and more options are coming soon," said Mayor Helps.

Even though in-person engagement events are cancelled, the City continues to communicate on social media. Information on projects the City is engaging on is available at engage.victoria.ca.

The public is invited to tune into the Mayor's Facebook Live weekday updates at 2:30 p.m. To learn more about the City's response to COVID-19, visit victoria.ca/covid19response.

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