



City of Victoria COVID-19 Update

Date: Thursday, April 2, 2020

For Immediate Release

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

Today, the province announced a \$3.5 million emergency fund for post-secondary students. This funding will support domestic B.C. students who are experiencing an unexpected financial emergency that may affect their ability to finish their studies and handle expenses. The emergency funding supplements existing student emergency financial assistance. Students should speak to their institution's financial aid office for more information.

In addition, the province also announced a \$300 a month COVID-19 supplement starting this month for those on disability and income assistance, and those receiving the BC seniors supplement. There will be a temporary clawback exemption for those receiving the \$2,000 federal benefit. Those who qualify for bus passes will have the amount of the bus pass added to their cheques for the duration of free transit.

"I would like to thank the provincial government for recognizing the impact that COVID-19 is having on our post-secondary students by making this emergency financial support available," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "I also commend them for finding new ways to supplement the income of our vulnerable citizens."

Today, Council passed a motion to temporarily reallocate some City Parks projects so that staff can contribute to food programs in the City. This work will involve growing plants in the Beacon Hill Park nursery. This initiative is a creative way to help people during this crisis without incurring any additional operational costs.

"By simply scaling up our already existing Growing in the City program, we can grow food plants and work with partners such as Urban Food Table on distribution," added Mayor Helps.

Council has directed City staff to examine all of the City's fiscal, legislative and legal powers to support small businesses and jobs, the non-profit sector, arts and culture and the tourism sector. The City is looking at every option to sustain the local economy during the pandemic to recover stronger and more resilient than before.

City staff will also prepare recommendations for keeping the development process going at City Hall and look at ways to have the public participate electronically in meetings of Council.

For information on the City's response to COVID-19, the public is invited to tune into the Mayor's Facebook Live weekday updates at 2:30 p.m. on the City of Victoria Facebook page, and to visit

victoria.ca/covid19response.

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