



## Council Provides COVID Relief to Residents and Businesses

Date: Thursday, April 9, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Today, City Council made amendments to the 2020 Budget to deliver a financial relief package to help those in the community who may be experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- There will be no property tax increase this year for residential or commercial ratepayers
- The deadline to pay property taxes has been extended to August 4 and a reduced penalty has been put in place for late payment
- The deadline for utility bill payments has been extended to 90 days

“Council has shown leadership in making these important decisions. We’re making these significant changes, while continuing to provide the services our residents depend on and leaving a little bit more money in people’s pockets. We understand the challenges out there,” said Mayor Lisa Helps. “These decisions will help in some small way to reduce the financial hardship many of our residents and businesses are currently experiencing due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.”

Council will advocate to the provincial government to reinstate the property tax deferment program and extend the program to commercial properties, as well as amend the homeowner grant program to increase amounts and create a new category of grant for those who have suffered financial hardship.

Most of the City’s capital projects will still go ahead as planned as they preserve existing infrastructure, are safety related or are already in progress. To take advantage of lower traffic levels, the City will accelerate some of its major capital projects slated for the downtown core.

While the City is reducing work in some areas, it has more than \$80 million in capital projects moving forward supporting the local economy. The \$21.8 million in capital project spending that Council has deferred as of today will serve as a stimulus during economic recovery.

To make it easier for those who need to come downtown and park, rates in City parkades will be reduced to a maximum of \$5 per day and on-street parking rates will be \$1 per hour with no time limits except for 30-minute zones. These rates will be in effect for as long as the provincial state of emergency is in place.

Starting tomorrow and for future weekends, Beacon Hill Park will be closed to public vehicle traffic. This will free up space so local residents can stay active while also maintaining safe physical distances. City staff will be out in parks to engage with residents about playground and recreation facility closures and remind park users about physical distancing.

In addition, parking along Dallas Road will be realigned from angle parking to parallel parking in order to maintain physical distances. Parking along Douglas Street and on Nursery Road will remain open with an increased number of accessible stalls.

“Beacon Hill Park and Dallas Road are a magnet for visitors from all over the region, however, it’s important right now that we stay close to our homes and not travel to parks outside our local neighbourhoods,” said Mayor Helps. “The Provincial Health Officer has encouraged us all to stay home as much as possible, and when we do go out for exercise and fresh air, staying close to home is the best option.”

A reminder that if your birthday is in October, November, December, today is the day to apply for the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit. Learn more and apply at [canada.ca/coronavirus](https://canada.ca/coronavirus).

Today the province announced an expansion of virtual mental health supports. Working with partners, this will consist of online counselling, including support for youth and immigrant and refugee populations. For details, visit the province’s COVID-19 website.

Please note there will be no Mayor’s Facebook Live updates over the long weekend. They will resume on Tuesday, April 14 at 2:30 p.m. For information on the City’s response to COVID-19, visit [victoria.ca/covid19response](https://victoria.ca/covid19response).

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