



## City of Victoria and DVBA COVID-19 Update

Date: Wednesday, April 15, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Mayor Lisa Helps was joined today by Jeff Bray, Executive Director of the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA), to provide an update on steps the City and the DVBA are taking to minimize the impacts of COVID-19 on the community.

Last week, City Council amended its 2020 Budget to deliver a financial relief package to help residents and businesses who may be experiencing financial hardship due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives include a zero-property tax increase, extending the deadline to pay property taxes to August 4 with a reduced penalty for late payment, and extending the deadline to pay utility bills to 90 days.

The City's Business Hub staff have compiled a comprehensive list of resources for businesses at [victoria.ca/bizresources](http://victoria.ca/bizresources). They are also participating in twice-weekly calls with business leaders and are sharing all available information on financial aid and support currently being provided by higher levels of government and offered by the local community.

Victoria City Council is also continuing its support of the Downtown Victoria Business Association to enable the organization to focus on supporting local businesses through the pandemic. In July, Council will pay the DVBA the annual levy the City collects from businesses, even though Council has extended the property tax deadline to August 4.

"City Council is committed to supporting the local business community through the COVID-19 pandemic," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "Supporting the DVBA through this challenging time demonstrates that we're all in this together to support our local economy."

This fiscal assurance will enable the DVBA to continue to employ their staff and refocus their efforts to ensure their 1,500 business members have all relevant information on emerging programs and resources. They are also using a range of online advertising and social media to encourage the public to support local retail and foodservice businesses with gift card purchases, online orders, and take-out and delivery options. For more information, visit: [downtownvictoria.ca](http://downtownvictoria.ca).

"Today is National Takeout Day. Check out your local restaurant online and order an extra take-out or delivery meal. You can also support local retailers by purchasing online gift cards now, putting much needed revenue into the pockets of businesses to help keep them going," said Jeff Bray, Executive Director of the Downtown Victoria Business Association.

"You may even want to consider sending an email to your favourite retailer, to let them know you'll be there for them, as this will greatly help with the morale of downtown businesses that have had to let their staff go due to the pandemic," added Jeff Bray.

There is a range of online resources the community can access to support local businesses:

- Gift cards for local businesses can be purchased online at Support Local Greater Victoria at [supportlocalyj.com](http://supportlocalyj.com).
- YYJLocalsForLocals is a group of community-minded tech and marketing professionals offering pro-bono assistance to local small businesses, restaurants, and bars. Learn more at [yyjlocalsforlocals.com](http://yyjlocalsforlocals.com).
- Donate to Boxes of Hope. Every \$10 donated provides a warm, healthy meal to someone in need and supports the local restaurant community by keeping staff employed. For more information, visit: [victoriahomelessness.ca/boxesofhope](http://victoriahomelessness.ca/boxesofhope).

Currently, the DVBA is partnering with the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness to help coordinate volunteers to distribute food at the temporary shelter at Topaz Park to help protect vulnerable populations. In addition, the DVBA Clean Team has stepped up its efforts in helping keep downtown clean, sanitizing and cleaning all transit stops downtown, staying on top of graffiti to ensure the area continues to feel safe, and being extra eyes on the street looking for and reporting any signs of criminal activity.

Today, the Prime Minister announced expanded access to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). To help more Canadians, the benefit will allow people to earn up to \$1,000 per month while collecting the CERB, and will be available to seasonal workers and others who have exhausted their EI benefits and are unable to find a job or return to work due to COVID-19. The new rules will likely extend CERB eligibility to an estimated 1.1 million Canadians who are still working but saw their hours drastically reduced amid COVID-19.

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](http://victoria.ca/covid19response).

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