



City of Victoria COVID-19 Update

Date: Friday, April 24, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Victoria City Council continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and look at ways to support residents and businesses.

At today's update, Mayor Lisa Helps invited the community to tune in this afternoon to *Nova Scotia Remembers*, a virtual vigil today at 3 p.m. Pacific Time in honour of the tragedy that occurred last weekend. Hosted by volunteers on the *Colchester Supporting our Communities* Facebook group and broadcast on news networks, the vigil will include community leaders, musicians and others paying tribute to those who lost their lives.

"This is an opportunity for us to come together and support those who are hurting so much right now," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "I'm wearing red today as a part of a national movement to honour Constable Heidi Stevenson who lost her life in the line of duty during the events in Nova Scotia."

Today the Prime Minister announced that the federal government has reached an agreement in principle with all provinces and territories to implement the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) for small businesses. This program will lower rent by 75 per cent for small businesses that have been affected by COVID-19.

Eligible small business tenants include those paying less than \$50,000 per month in rent and who have temporarily ceased operations or have experienced at least a 70 per cent drop in pre-COVID-19 revenues. This support will also be available to non-profit and charitable organizations.

"This is very good news and a measure that Council and many community leaders have been pushing for. We have so many much-loved local businesses here in Victoria who will be helped by this benefit. As well, the City continues to offer assistance and resources through our Business Hub at victoria.ca/bizresources," said Mayor Helps.

Supported by VanCity, the ThinkLocalFirst program "supportlocalyyj" is a central place where the community can buy gift certificates to local businesses for future use. Currently 157 local businesses have registered to participate in this free service. The gift certificates range from \$10 to \$1,000 and close to \$16,000 in gift certificates have been purchased to date. For more information, visit: <https://supportlocalyyj.com>.

"Every dollar spent goes directly into the pockets of local business owners to help them pay employees and pay their rent," said Mayor Helps. "It's a real morale boost to the small businesses that we all love."

To celebrate National Poetry Month, City of Victoria Poet Laureate John Barton has brought together local poets Terry Ann Carter, Christine Walde and Derk Wynand for a virtual poetry reading titled the *Worldliness of Poetry*. The featured readings will connect viewers to Germany, Portugal, France and Japan, transcending physical distancing and self-isolation. The event was originally scheduled to take place at the Greater Victoria Public Library but was cancelled due to the pandemic. Learn more at victoria.ca/poetlaureate.

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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