



City of Victoria COVID-19 Update

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Victoria City Council continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and explore ways to support the community. Mayor Lisa Helps began her update by acknowledging today is International Nurses Day.

“More than ever, I know we are all so keenly aware of the amazing work that nurses do in our community. On behalf of City Council, thank you for ALL that you do. I invite the community to give nurses an extra loud cheer at 7 p.m. tonight,” said Mayor Lisa Helps.

Today, the Prime Minister announced additional supports for seniors. Old Age Security recipients will receive a one-time payment of \$300, Guaranteed Income Supplement recipients will receive a one-time payment of \$200, and some seniors will receive both.

In addition, \$20 million in federal funding has been allocated to the New Horizons for Seniors Program to support organizations that offer community-based projects that reduce isolation, improve the quality of life of seniors, and help them maintain a social support network.

“I commend the federal government for this additional investment today for seniors,” said Mayor Helps. “I hope that some of this funding flows to our amazing seniors centre here in Victoria.”

At this Thursday’s Committee of the Whole meeting, Council will discuss what COVID-19 recovery could look like in the capital city. A broad range of Council member motions and staff reports are available for viewing on the City’s website, some of which include options for holding public hearings, adapting the My Great Neighbourhood Grant program, and supports for small business, arts and culture, and the visitor economy.

Proposals for discussion will also include *Victoria 3.0* – a new economic action plan for the city, support for allowing restaurants, cafes, and retailers to expand into public spaces, grants specific to the arts community and COVID-19 recovery projects, and increasing physical distancing space for pedestrians in public spaces.

“Council will discuss creative ways the City can look at doing things differently in our new normal,” said Mayor Helps. “I’m really excited for the opportunity to see some of these ideas come to life quickly to support residents and our small businesses during the recovery period.”

Additional recovery strategies for discussion will include extending parking fee reductions downtown through the summer, the flexible use of commercial loading zones, expediting housing security actions in the City’s Housing Strategy, food security options for renters, advocacy for increased sheltering options, and identifying priority capital projects in preparation for any federal and provincial infrastructure funding that may arise.

Council will also look at holding a virtual “Recovery Town Hall” in the near future to share the City’s recovery plans with the community and to answer questions.

To support local arts and culture, the City of Victoria Youth Poet Laureate Neko Smart is looking for artists to participate in *Youth Verses*. The free, virtual workshop series invites youth aged 14 to 19 who identify as visual and performance artists, to take part in conversations about harnessing creativity while navigating mental illness.

Facilitated by Smart, the workshops will take place in a collaborative and safe space, where youth feel supported and inspired to create their art without judgement. At the end of the series, participants’ artwork will be displayed in a virtual showcase. The deadline to apply is May 25 at 4 p.m. For more information, visit: victoria.ca.

The Mayor’s Facebook Live COVID-19 updates take place on Tuesdays and Fridays at 2:30 p.m. on the City of Victoria Facebook page. For more information on the City’s response to the pandemic, visit: victoria.ca/covid19response.

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