



## City of Victoria COVID-19 Update

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For Immediate Release

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

This week, the Province announced Phase 3 of its *ReStart Plan*, which allows for “safe and smart travel” within BC and the re-opening of more hotels and resorts. Destination Greater Victoria is also promoting wide open spaces and places in Victoria, and ideas for what visitors from other parts of the province can do when visiting the Capital City. For more information, visit: [tourismvictoria.com](https://tourismvictoria.com).

“This is really good news for Victoria as tourism is a key element of our economy, particularly during the summer months,” said Mayor Lisa Helps. “Destination Greater Victoria is doing some amazing work in re-thinking what tourism looks like in Victoria and I encourage everyone to be a tourist in our own home town – to check out some of the things you haven’t yet checked out and explore places you haven’t yet explored.”

The federal and provincial governments recently committed \$20 million to match the Capital Regional District’s contribution of \$10 million for the *Regional Housing First* program, which is on track to have more than 1,800 affordable housing units completed or under construction in Greater Victoria by the end of 2022. The units will be a mixture of shelter-rate, affordable rental, and near-market rental – all of which are needed in the region.

“I commend the provincial and federal governments and the Capital Regional District for their investments in the *Regional Housing First* program. This unprecedented program was made possible by all municipalities participating and is exactly the kind of cooperation we need to address housing affordability and homelessness across the region,” said Mayor Helps.

At this week’s Committee of the Whole meeting, based on public health advice, Council voted to allow people without homes to keep their tents up in permitted sheltering areas in the city until further advice is received from Dr. Bonnie Henry.

“This is a temporary measure due to COVID-19. Services and shelters have been severely reduced and people without homes literally have nowhere to go during the day. I’d like to ask for patience and understanding, recognizing that we are still in the middle of a global health pandemic. Victoria is not alone. We need to work together and advocate to the provincial and particularly the federal government for more housing solutions,” said Mayor Helps.

Yesterday, Council approved the *Everyday Creativity Grant*, a new, one-time grant aimed at increasing access for everyone to be creative through the arts and improve mental and physical health. Non-profit organizations or people partnering with non-profits are invited to submit ideas for engaging people to be creative and participate in the arts. Projects with an emphasis on learning, creative expression and broad public participation are eligible and grants range from \$500 to \$5,000. Information on how to apply will be available next week.

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The City's Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee is seeking proposals for the *2020 Participatory Budgeting* initiative, which will see \$50,000 invested in projects benefitting new immigrants and refugees in Victoria. Anyone with an idea for a project or activity that will enhance or enrich the lives of newcomers in the community is invited to apply online at [engage.victoria.ca/participatory-budgeting](https://engage.victoria.ca/participatory-budgeting) by 4 p.m. on July 31, 2020.

"If you have an idea or are curious about the participatory budgeting process and want to know more, two virtual open houses will be held on July 7 and 11 where you can learn all about it. I'm excited to see which projects our residents think are important," said Mayor Helps.

To date, under the *Build Back Victoria* initiative, the City has received 55 applications for new patios or flex spaces, 28 of which have been approved and 16 are in progress. *Build Back Victoria* initiatives support local businesses during their re-opening and recovery from the pandemic by providing public spaces for private use. Spaces on sidewalks, on streets, in parking spaces, and in plazas and parks are temporarily being made available for businesses to expand their footprint to safely conduct commercial activities.

"These applications are coming from all over the city – downtown, James Bay, Fernwood, Hillside-Quadra. It's great to see more space being created for businesses. We really need to do what we can to help businesses through this very challenging time. And it's great for us, their loyal customers," said Mayor Helps.

The community is invited to watch *Victoria's Canada Day*, a virtual celebration on July 1 at 7 p.m. on CHEK for an impressive line-up of diverse, multicultural performances and community content. The one-hour, commercial free broadcast will also be streamed on [canadadayvictoria.ca](https://canadadayvictoria.ca) and the City's You Tube channel.

Hosted by CHEK's Joe Perkins and Stacy Ross, *Victoria's Canada Day* will feature musical performances from an exciting local line-up, with a special performance by the *Lekwungen Traditional Dancers*.

"What it means to live in Canada very much depends on your personal experience, whether you're Indigenous, a newcomer, or have lived here for much or all of your life. We need to respect that for many, Canada Day is not an occasion for celebration. We need to acknowledge together our past wrongs and continue to work together with respect, cooperation and in partnership towards reconciliation.

Even though we can't physically be together on the Legislature Lawn as we usually do, we can still come together virtually to celebrate and mark Canada's strengths and its diversity," said Mayor Helps.

The Mayor's Facebook Live COVID-19 updates take place on Fridays at 1 p.m. on the City of Victoria Facebook page. The next update will take place on July 10. For more information on the City's response and recovery to the pandemic, visit: [victoria.ca/covid19response](https://victoria.ca/covid19response).

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