



City of Victoria COVID-19 Update

Date: Friday, July 17, 2020

For Immediate Release

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

Yesterday, the federal and provincial governments announced they had come to a *Safe Restart Agreement*. The new initiative will include a national sick day program, the creation of childcare spaces, operational funding for municipalities, funding for transit and funding for vulnerable populations with mental health and addiction challenges, and those who are homeless.

Also, this week, the Prime Minister announced the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy will be extended until December, which will support local businesses with their re-opening and recovery.

“The national *Safe Restart* program is very good news. We’ll be working with the federal and provincial governments to ensure Victorians benefit,” said Mayor Lisa Helps. “Extending the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy will significantly benefit our business community that continues to struggle during this challenging time. It’s really great to see this federal support continue.”

Today, the City of Victoria, in partnership with the South Island Prosperity Partnership and the marine sector, took an exciting step in the development of an Ocean Futures Innovation Hub for Victoria. A request for proposals has been issued, seeking assistance in the development of a plan to build a downtown Oceans Hub that will house companies and create jobs for those working and wanting to work in the ocean and marine sector.

“*Victoria 3.0*, the City’s economic action plan, focuses on COVID-19 recovery and building a resilient economy. Creating an Oceans Innovation Hub is one of the first key actions of that plan,” said Mayor Helps.

In arts and culture news, the City’s annual *Eventide Music Series* kicks off tonight at 7 p.m. and will feature an eclectic line-up of BC artists who will livestream on Twitch from various locations in Victoria and Vancouver. The community is invited to tune in Friday evenings over the next eight weeks for this free, one-hour live show. For more information, visit: facebook.com/eventidemusicseries.

“We know that artists have been deeply affected by the pandemic and *Eventide* presents an opportunity to support local artists and hear new music they have been creating during the lockdown,” said Mayor Helps.

To date, the City's *Build Back Victoria* initiative that supports local businesses with their pandemic economic re-opening and recovery, has received 86 applications, of which 23 are in progress and 50 permits have been issued. A number of applications are from Cook Street Village and the first hair salon has been issued a flex space.

As of yesterday, Broad Street between Fort and Broughton Streets is closed to vehicle traffic to establish a pedestrian zone. The initiative is the result of various businesses collaborating to make this block a safe and welcoming space.

"I'm so proud of local businesses for trying new things. I encourage you to get out and about this weekend and check out the new patios and flex spaces that are popping up all over the city," added Mayor Helps.

The Mayor's Facebook Live COVID-19 update takes place on Fridays at 1 p.m. on the City of Victoria Facebook page. For more information on the City's response and recovery to the pandemic, visit: victoria.ca/covid19response.

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