



**Council Member Motion  
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 19, 2020**

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**Date:** March 17, 2020  
**From:** Councillor Ben Isitt, Councillor Jeremy Loveday and Councillor Sarah Potts  
**Subject:** Reducing Economic Hardship Arising from COVID-19

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**Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing substantial economic hardship for some workers and businesses in the City of Victoria, as a result of reduced economic activity and compliance with directives of public health officials and government entities.

To support the wellbeing of individuals, and safeguard the economic base of the community, it is recommended that Council initiate the following actions without delay, which align with other recommendations under consideration by Council.

**Recommendations**

That Council:

1. Direct staff to develop an Action Plan without delay identifying measures within municipal jurisdiction to reduce economic hardship on individuals and organizations impacted by COVID-19, including consideration of the following measures:
  - (a) Repurposing underutilized facilities for emergency shelter and healthcare for the unhoused, to allow for social distancing, proper care and recovery.
  - (b) Emergency regulations to restrict evictions of tenants who have suffered a loss of earnings due to quarantine, self-isolation, layoff or declining economic activity.
  - (c) Temporary deferral of fees, taxes and other payments owing to the city from those suffering hardship.
2. Advocate to the Governments of British Columbia and Canada for immediate action along the following lines:
  - (a) Emergency housing and healthcare for the unhoused through the retrofitting of underutilized facilities to allow for social distancing, proper care and recovery.
  - (b) Income support through Employment Insurance, statutory Paid Sick Leave provisions and / or other programs to replace earnings that have been lost as a result of COVID-19, with immediate and retroactive effect, including eligibility for precariously employed workers in the service sector and "gig economy", self-employed workers and small business operators.

- (c) A temporary moratorium on evictions, foreclosures and payment of debt and utility fees.
  - (d) Support for Indigenous communities that are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to substandard health, housing, water and social service systems.
  - (e) Temporary deferral of payroll deduction remittances (i.e. EI, CPP, Income Tax) and income tax instalment payments where necessary to reduce pressure on business cash reserves and maintain payment to employees and suppliers.
3. Request that the Mayor write, on behalf of Council, to the Premier of British Columbia and the Prime Minister of Canada, requesting immediate action along the lines outlined above, and indicating the City of Victoria's willingness to cooperate with those orders of government to ensure an integrated and effective response to COVID-19, including reducing economic hardship on individuals and organizations and safeguarding the economic base of the community.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Isitt



Councillor Loveday



Councillor Potts