

March 19/20 CAO Remarks

Good Morning Mayor and Council.

I would like to share an update on COVID – 19 and the steps taken to protect the health and safety of the public and staff and to ensure that we are able to provide essential services.

That includes changes in this chamber to allow social distancing between attendees. I appreciate your cooperation in assisting us in managing these measures.

The City has 1000 employees and provides over 200 services to City of Victoria residents.

During this challenging time, the City must continue to operate and continue maintain service delivery that is essential to the wellbeing of residents.

These Services include:

- Solid waste collection
- Parks management
- Bylaw services
- Development services,
- Fire suppression
- Water treatment
- Health and safety

- Tax collection
- And...legislative services to name a few....
- And currently the staffing and support for the operation of the EOC including business continuity planning and implementation.

Specific to City services we are undertaking the following:

Currently managers are working business unit by business unit to see how we can keep workers safe while keeping the business of the City running.

As an organization, we reinforced direction from the Provincial Health Officer by implementing our own directive to place staff on administrative leave if they were directed to self-isolate by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and when returning home to Canada from travelling.

Departments are implementing temporary remote work options for employees in positions where this is operationally possible

We are also taking immediate and ongoing action to reduce the risk to employees and the public by implementing operational changes and social distancing measures in alignment with direction from public health officials

We have activated our Emergency Operations Centre and are connected to Emergency Management BC and Health Emergency Management BC to receive and provide information

through those organizations. We also have been given a task number from EMBC for reimbursement of extraordinary expenses related to the response to the pandemic.

This week, we closed City Hall to the public except by appointment only. Public Service Counter staff continue to serve the public over the phone and development services and permits continue to serve the public through appointments. These services are key to continuing to advance the businesses of city finance and planning land use which will be key to our recovery post pandemic.

We have also cancelled all city events, advisory committee and task forces at city hall until further notice.

We have increased our cleaning protocols in all City facilities to meet public health recommendations.

On Tuesday we also closed Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre and Royal Athletic Park and all related recreation programs and services. At that time, we advised all community centres of the need to close.

At the Victoria Conference Centre we have been dealing with clients who have been forced to cancel events in the next 90 days. Currently these booking are being rebooked for later in 2020 or early in 2021.

And while our primary attention is focused on city services, we recognize that the City is part of a larger community.

To that end we have been reaching out to our partners in the health and social service space including Island Health, BC Housing and the Coalition to End Homelessness as well as an array of service providers to discuss the needs of the most vulnerable in our community,

We have also reached out to the business community to come up with ideas on how we can support and maintain the viability of our small businesses downtown during this challenging period. To that end, we have positioned the Business Hub as the repository of information related to Provincial and Federal services for workers and business owners.

We are also engaged with our tourism, hospitality and transportation partners to share information and determine actions that we can take to support each other through this period and to position for recovery.

Finally, we are connected through the CAO network across the Province and are readily sharing and receiving information related to maintaining services, and serving the public while ensuring health and safety measures related to COVID 19.