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NEWS RELEASE
March 25, 2020
[Sooke, BC]

Think “Local First” for essential household goods

Earlier this week, District of Sooke Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) personnel reached out to representatives of the local business community. Members of our planning and logistics team spoke with business owners and staff to check-in regarding operations, current needs, and future concerns.

The message heard repeatedly was that where possible, local businesses are trying to remain open to serve residents of Sooke, while also following the guidelines provided by the Provincial Health Officer and protecting the health and well-being of their staff. Many have changed their business models in response to Provincial Orders; restaurants have shifted to delivery and take out services only and others are operating with reduced hours and modified staffing. Reminders of physical distancing requirements have been put in place, and where possible separation of staff from customers have been installed.

Themes of compassion and service ran throughout many of the conversations with local businesses. Even as we reached out to discuss specific business needs, the discussion often flipped to how businesses could help residents. As business owners shared their fears and feelings of uncertainty, many also offered assistance, assets, and supplies. For example, Sheringham Distillery is now producing hand sanitizer, which they delivered to the Sooke Fire Department today for members who are on the front line of health care in our community. Thank you to Sheringham Distillery and those they are partnering with for making this valuable resource available in our region.

“The spirit of this community continues to amaze me”, says Mayor Maja Tait. “Businesses are adapting quickly and are doing so with empathy and genuine concern for their staff and the larger community. Local businesses need the equal support of Sooke residents right now. I encourage everyone to shop local when gathering essential household items.”

Residents are reminded to remain in their homes and to limit time spent in the community. Consider consolidating errands to reduce potential exposure, and always remain a minimum of 2 meters from other people.

Recent Federal and Provincial announcements have outlined economic supports available to businesses. The BC COVID-19 Action Plan outlines both immediate and long-term stimulus programs to see businesses through the current pandemic and the recovery period that is expected to follow. Further information on direct funding available, as well as various tax relief programs, can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/tax-changes/covid-19-tax-changes>

Information for businesses is also available via the BC Small Business Branch and Small Business BC websites:

- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/business/small-business>
- https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/employment-business-and-economic-development/business-management/small-business/business_continuity_covid-19_-_small_business_resources.pdf
- <https://smallbusinessbc.ca/article/resources-for-small-businesses-affected-by-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Updates for March 25, 2020:

Highlights from the March 25, 2020 update by BC’s Provincial Health Officer, include:

- While the maximum allowable size of public gatherings remains at 50 people, it is advisable to limit your contact to members of your immediate household, including while outside your home.
- Physical distancing of 2 meters applies while outdoors. People should not gather in parks or other outdoor spaces.
- To reduce isolation, find other ways to connect with people.

New announcements for renters and landlords, including:

- Up to \$500 per month in rental supplements for those who face loss of income due to COVID-19
- Halting evictions during the Provincial State of Emergency.
- Further information can be found here:
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020MAH0048-000561>

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