

SNM April 8

Sooke News Mirror ~ Message from the Mayor

It hardly needs repeating that we're living through extraordinary times, certainly unprecedented in their scale and impact for most of us alive today. As challenging as it is to navigate daily life, it has been a continual source of wonder and inspiration to me to see how our own and so many communities across Canada are rallying together and collectively flattening what could be a devastating curve if we don't remain vigilant and focused.

Many are understandably anxious and frightened. Yet I'm also seeing how sensibly we're navigating the new reality. The vast majority of us are listening to Dr. Bonnie Henry and the health professionals. We're staying at home as much as circumstances allow. We're physically distancing ourselves when out and about. We're looking after one another and demonstrating why we've been locally recognized as a Compassionate Community within a larger compassionate nation.

My sincerest gratitude goes out to everyone on the front lines. To highlight three of many organizations doing vital work at this time, I want to thank the volunteers at the Sooke Food Bank and the Sooke Shelter Society (both supported by your cash donations through www.canadahelps.org) as well as the team at the Sooke Region Volunteer Centre as they coordinate the Safe Seniors, Strong Communities program locally; please dial 211 if you wish to help isolated Sooke seniors during what is proving to be a desperate time for some.

In the spirit of the pot banging, singing and applause ringing out across town at 7 p.m. each night, I'm sending a shout-out to our health and protective service personnel, BC Transit drivers and everyone else involved in essential services. That very definitely includes our store employees -- the cashiers, the shelf-stockers, the cleaners and the delivery drivers. These people take a health risk daily so that we can shop for the items we need. They merit our deepest respect and appreciation.

As for municipal hall, Council meetings were officially cancelled for a month beginning in mid-March. However the province last week amended the Local Government Act to permit special meetings related to time-sensitive emergency issues and financial reporting. We met online last week and adopted Sooke's Five-Year Financial Plan in time to meet its mandated provincial deadline. Beyond this limited role, however, we have no desire to tackle any business that leaves our residents without the opportunity to oversee and weigh in on our decision-making process.

Your Councillors continue to participate in online meetings related to their various external appointments. They're also doing their homework, reviewing District plans and reports while anticipating a return to business as usual. I'm proud to note that this council was very proactive early in its term in setting policy that supports local emergency services, including the

Emergency Operations Centre now up and running under the direction of Deputy Fire Chief Matt Barney.

As for myself, I am in hourly conversations with residents and my peers (other elected folk) from both our region and beyond, to understand and be aware of emerging needs. Together we continue to work with the Province and the federal government to find solutions. I'm seeing unfailingly level-headed leadership at the municipal, regional, provincial and federal levels in my roles as Sooke's Mayor, as a Capital Regional District director, and as president of the Union of BC Municipalities.

Many thanks to all of you who send me supportive messages and encouragement. I'm very grateful. I'll continue to offer occasional reports on my Facebook page *MajaTait* (one word) and will continue broadcasting messages live from council chambers on Mondays at 1 p.m. Please visit the District's website (www.sooke.ca) and click on the "COVID-19 Need to Know" and "Local Business Information" links for extensive details on how we as a community and local government are dealing with the crisis.

I'll end with an expanded version of my usual sign-off these days: Stay healthy. Be kind. Keep cool and calm ... and wash your hands!

Sincerely,
Mayor Maja Tait