

Transcription of video recording

Good afternoon.

I wish to begin today by acknowledging that we are on the territory of the T'Sou-ke Nation. I'm here today with gratitude, we have moved my desk a little closer so you can see me a little better and it's display that I'm not just a voice in the room.

I would like to begin today by thanking all our front line and essential workers, and to all those following the necessary provincial health orders. I do wish to give a big shout out to store employees, from cashiers to the staff stocking shelves, the cleaners and the delivery drivers. Did you ever think that you would become an essential worker when you applied for the job at one of our local grocery stores? This is a very busy time for all of you and you are taking a health risk by going into work daily so that we may all find the essential items that we need so thank you so much for all the work that you're doing. I also wish to acknowledge delivery drivers, this is a lonelier time than usual given that so many restaurants and cafes are closed, but I just want you to know that we really appreciate your service.

Students, teachers, educators and parents will be transitioning to a learn from home model, we wish you the very best as you navigate what works in your household, best wishes to all of you.

This afternoon I wish to give you a bit of a summary of the week and then an update on where we are today and what may look what may lie ahead. My first announcement came back on March 16th, this was my very first webcast in this forum and this is when we suspended council meetings for one month, and we also closed municipal hall to the public on that day. At that time 103 people had tested positive for Covid-19 in the province and on March 23rd that increase to 472. As of this past Saturday we were at 884. I was advised that that on a positive note that 45% of those who were confirmed to have contracted the disease have now recovered.

All residents are urged to continue isolating and distancing, as per Doctor Bonnie Henry has warned us that a severe outbreak is still possible if we don't follow the advice from health officials.

There have been some changes this past week, you may know that backyard burning, and any land clearing burning is now prohibited, this was announced by the province on March 26. This includes the area from Greater Victoria to Port Renfrew, which was in a news release from the Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with provincial public health partners, issuing the restrictions. There is an interactive map available on the provincial website. Cases of corona-virus in BC continue to increase, the BC Center for Disease Control recommends implementing measures that help to reduce excess air pollution in populated areas across the province. There is strong evidence that exposure to air pollution increases susceptibility to respiratory infections by decreasing immune function. This means that deterioration air quality may lead to more infections, deterioration and more severe cases. An improvement to air quality may help protect the entire population from Covid-19.

We have closed all of our playgrounds and several of our parks this past week. We also received direction from the province on procedural changes to the Local Government Act on how we may conduct necessary business in our current situation. For those of you using BC Transit, you'll note that its rear door loading only except for accessibility needs and there is no fare collection at this time. There has been a significant decrease in ridership on some routes, so service has been scaled down

accordingly. It's important though, if you rely on transit please let us know if you're passed up or if you find that the bus is not providing the service that you need.

We're all doing our part here, at the District of Sooke, our staff continue to find new ways to improve on service delivery to our residents while supporting one another and their families. I'm very proud of our organization and very grateful for our CAO Norm McInnis, who is guiding our operations in a calm and thoughtful manner. I feel that his approach is serving us well and will guide us through these extraordinary times and prepare us for what lies ahead. On our website www.sooke.ca you'll find that there is a specific Covid-19 web page, you'll find it in the middle of our homepage.

District bylaw officers have been stepped up with a stronger presence in the business community to monitor social distancing and safe practices. I'm happy to report that local businesses are going above and beyond. We have much appreciation for those businesses who are taking action to keep both their residents and employees safe, while still being able to keep their doors open and provide necessary service. Thank you so much for being proactive and compliant in your practices. Grocery stores have taken measures to allow residents in while maintaining social distances. We were advised that there is enough space in grocery stores to allow residents to shop safely and that such is not considered a gathering, if the store is big enough and shoppers respect social distancing while in the store. The province is also recommending that grocery stores do not accept reusable bags for sanitary reasons currently.

The District has also created a business resource page, which is available from the homepage or off the link of the Covid-19 page. This contains resources for small businesses to help them through this time and lists local businesses that are open, noting special hours and delivery options. This site is continually being updated as new information comes available.

I would like to remind every one of the park closures, Whiffen Spit, Ed McGregor and the Boardwalk are all closed. Another note, the Sooke Bike Park and Skate Park, operated by Seaparc, through the Capital Regional District will also be closed. Unfortunately, the signs at the Skate Park and Ed MacGregor Park were both vandalized extensively. These have both been reported to the RCMP. While our bylaw enforcement officers can enforce provincial orders, please note that our approach has always been to inform and educate. In fact, since incorporation we've maybe issued half a dozen tickets, approximately one every three years since we've been incorporated. We intend to work in that manner to work with you with kindness and respect in terms of social gathering, if you notice a non-compliant large social gathering please contact the RCMP non-emergency line at 250-642-5241, calls will be routed to a call centre and the RCMP will determine the appropriate response.

A reminder that backyard burning is prohibited including land clearing; we've received several burning complaints. If you do smell or see something, please contact our Fire department.

For food bank support, were very grateful to have our local food bank which has evolved through these challenging times. The province has announced emergency funding to help with food banks and to keep up with the surge in demand. Food Banks BC will distribute funds to food banks province-wide to help buy and distribute food, as well as cover costs. Please support our local food bank which does welcome cash donations at www.canadahelps.org donors will be issued a tax receipt.

There is a senior's helpline, BC 2-1-1, the province announced a province-wide expansion of 2-1-1 services as part of a new initiative called Save Seniors-Strong Communities; now seniors can dial 2-1-1 to

request assistance. If you are interested in help with grocery shopping, meal prep, prescription pickup or a friendly check-in please call 2-1-1.

School District 62 is working on setting up childcare for those workers deemed essential by the province. There is an online form available on SD62 website. Please review the information and register as an essential worker.

The Victoria Foundation has launched the rapid relief fund, this is a coalition of business and generous partners who have joined to create a fund to quickly disperse funds to register charities across the region. As of today, they've raised over 2.6 million dollars with a goal of 3 million. Donations can be made through the Victoria Foundation's website, with matching funds put forward by local businesses.

Special Council meetings are an option, the intent is to only pass emergency and time restricted decisions related to finance. There's no motivation to pass anything that leaves our residents out of the loop with no ability to provide necessary insight or input.

At 7 o'clock you will have likely heard many residents celebrating healthcare workers and frontline workers by banging pots and pans and singing. It's wonderful to see such local support and positive messaging as residents come together in gratitude. We also have local musicians singing and playing instruments.

Over the course of the week we will be monitoring the provincial updates and responding if needed. There may potentially be further closures of other outdoor gathering spaces. Members of council are continuing work with external appointments that are meetings online, reviewing materials and planning. Our council was very proactive early on in setting policy that supports emergency operations, as well as the Emergency Operations Center. This type of proactive policy development is serving us well. A new procedural bylaw was adopted that enables us to meet remotely, it's important to us that we hear from you and that's why we've been waiting for provincial legislation on how we may proceed in a matter that you expect from us.

There have been many announcements from the federal and provincial government on benefits for individual's families and small businesses; please let us know how this process is working for you.

For myself, I've been busy with scheduled teleconference meetings with the province, as well as the federal government through the work of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, weekly calls with representatives of the Rural Forum Committee and the Primary Health Care Working Services Group. These meetings are held over Zoom, all with a focus Covid-19 impacts on local resources. I've also been learning new technology and finding time for self-care, as I feel it's very important for me to remain firmly between the lines of cool and calm.

We're all in this together and when we work together, we are stronger together, so in that I would like to close by asking you to keep healthy, to be kind, and to wash your hands.

Thank you,
Mayor Tait

[Mayor's Public Address – March 30, 2020](#)