

March 25 2020

COVID-19 Message #2

To our citizens,

As I write this message, I am conscious that we are all experiencing changes to our lives not experienced since perhaps the early part of the 20th Century. However, let's always remember that we are all in this together, and that we share our concerns with millions of people who, like us, just want to get back to our normal, often boring, day-to-day lives.

Thank you all for doing your part to follow the orders of the Provincial Health Officer and for keeping our community as safe as possible.

I especially thank the many health care workers, doctors, first responders, police and local government workers who continue to provide essential services, often while putting themselves at risk. For example, while many frontline health care workers are tested for COVID-19, our police and fire workers are not yet offered testing.

In response, our elected officials on the Sunshine Coast have sent a joint letter to the Minister of Health asking that this be changed so that the men and woman who are working to keep us safe are in turn kept safe and able to do their jobs.

I also thank the many businesses in our community that have either closed their doors or significantly curtailed their services. Our town depends on small businesses to provide both employment and the goods and services we need, and this represents a serious loss to our community.

In some cases, businesses such as breweries and restaurants are offering take out or delivery service. I encourage you to support them if you can.

Similarly, other essential businesses, like grocery stores and pharmacies, remain open and are now offering various services through phone orders, deliveries, and special shopping hours. They are also working to manage the number of customers in their stores, to ensure that social distancing is maintained. We see the extraordinary effort that is being made by these businesses to ensure we have access to the supplies we need, and we salute them.

For some, these new business models may be frustrating. However, it's important to remember that they are necessary to keep us all safe and to ensure we comply with the Orders of the Provincial Health Officer which, once issued, automatically become Law.

Unfortunately, this week in Gibsons we made the decision to close our playground structures due to our inability to keep them sanitized and safe.

However, our parks and trails remain open and we encourage you to get outside and enjoy these areas while always remembering to practice safe distancing from others. It is very encouraging and uplifting to see all of the signs of Spring appearing in our community with blossoms, flowers, birds and yes, the deer, returning to our neighbourhoods. A sure sign that rhythm of nature continues in spite of the COVID-19 crisis.



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You can stay up-to-date with ongoing changes to Town services, by visiting our dedicated COVID-19 webpage at gibsons.ca/covid-19.

One question that has come up frequently is, why are we still allowing visitors to come to the Sunshine Coast?

The answer is that, at present, there is no Order from the Minister of Health to prevent people from leaving their home communities. That said, regional travel is being actively discouraged by various levels of government and Sunshine Coast Tourism.

I strongly agree with the message put out earlier by SCRD Chair Lori Pratt, that if you do not need to be here, please stay home. We do not have sufficient health services or other amenities to support an influx of visitors (even if you are seasonal Coasters) and by coming here, you put our residents and communities at risk by potentially transmitting the virus from another place.

If, on the other hand, you are returning to Canada, we welcome you home. We also remind you that, as of midnight today, March 25th, the Federal Government has invoked the Quarantine Act, which requires you to self-isolate for 14 days.

Please comply with this directive – when you arrive on the Coast, go directly to your home, without stopping for groceries or other supplies. Instead, call a friend to help you with shopping - we are all getting used to that.

In the past few days, a number of new initiatives have been launched on the Coast and in Gibsons. These include:

- A Sunshine Coast Community Task Force. This initiative, intended to coordinate information about a wide range of community services, is spearheaded by Mayor Siegers in Sechelt and supported coast wide by volunteers. Councillor David Croal has offered to represent the Town of Gibsons on this Task Force;
- The Town of Gibsons' Corporate Officer is in the process of organizing a volunteer Business Watch Program that is modeled on programs such as Neighbourhood Watch and Citizens on Patrol. This program will help to support our local businesses which are closed while owners and employees self-isolate at home. Details of this program will be announced shortly;
- Locally elected officials have lobbied the Minister of Health for testing of police and first responders;
- Local governments continue to work together to share information and best practices and the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is now open. All communities are represented on the EOC-Policy Committee which meets on Zoom every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to discuss emerging issues;
- All mayors in the Coastal Health Region participate on scheduled conference calls with Coastal Health authorities. These are also held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday to discuss emerging issues; and
- Our local Mayors, SCRD Chair and Chief of the Sechelt Nation also have regular conference calls. If there are issues that you would like me to bring forward at this, or any other, meeting please let me know at: mayor@gibsons.ca



Our Town Council is also continuing to meet as needed. Please monitor our website for meeting agendas and minutes. Yesterday afternoon, staff and Council met to continue discussion of the 2020 Budget which, I am pleased to say, is very close to completion.

Finally, I recognize that what we are all experiencing today is frustrating for everyone and a severe hardship for some. However, we must continue to work together.

There is a lot we can learn from each other that will help us in the future and we thank all of you for your many ideas and for your volunteer initiatives and participation in the community.

As a senior, I have significantly reduced my presence at the Town office and in the community at this time. However, I continue to work, and to enjoy walking with Heather, my wife, and our dog SAMI around the neighbourhood and on some of the forest trails near our home. If you see me out, please say hi but keep your distance.

As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions by email to: mayorandcouncil@gibsons.ca or by phone at 604-989-2364.

On behalf of Gibsons Council and Staff, thank you for your continued efforts,

Bill Beamish

Mayor
Town of Gibsons

