

April 30, 2020

COVID-19 Message #7

Gibsons Demonstrating Strong Community Resilience

To the Community of Gibsons,

This past week, I had the opportunity to visit most of the stores and businesses in Gibsons and to meet with their owners or staff as they conducted business. (By meeting, I of course mean standing 2 meters from them and talking.) To the store owners: if I did not speak with you, it was because you were busy or because your signage clearly told me how you are now providing services, or because, as a customer, I am already familiar with what you are doing. In any case, I thank you.

I was encouraged by the positive attitudes and honest concern for our community expressed by the people I met. I was also struck by the ability of our local businesses to adapt to the new circumstances and continue to provide needed services, as we all struggle to cope with COVID-19.

I saw numerous changes in the way business is now being conducted, with many new procedures and innovations adopted to ensure that the safety of customers and employees remains a top priority. It was also great to learn that, in many cases, landlords are working with their commercial tenants by relaxing rent payment requirements, and helping them to apply for government rent assistance.

The one clear observation that I made as I walked about Gibsons, is that most of our local businesses are trying to maintain some level of service, while also complying with the safety guidelines provided by our Medical Health Officers. That's great news!

Community resilience is defined as 'the sustained ability of a community to use available resources to respond, withstand and recover from adverse situations.' The many transitions I witnessed, from a "business-as-usual" model to a "post-pandemic" business model, are truly community resilience in action.

We as residents and consumers have also adapted the way we shop and move about in our community. We are washing our hands, using hand sanitizers, self-isolating and practicing physical distancing, all of which have helped 'flatten the curve' and prevent an outbreak of COVID-19 in Gibsons.



[visit gibsons.ca](http://visitgibsons.ca)

By working together and being vigilant, we are better able to leave the safety of our homes and pass into the relative safety of our community and its local businesses in order to shop, have a coffee, post a letter, chat with friends while physically distancing, or take a long walk in the sunshine.

Of course, not all businesses are open. Those classified as ‘personal service’ establishments, like hairdressers, barbers, tattoo parlors, and masseurs, remain closed in compliance with the Orders of the Medical Health Officer. Other business owners have chosen to remain closed out of concern for the safety of their staff or perhaps due to an inability to adjust their business models to ensure social distancing or the rigorous sanitization of their premises.

The range we are seeing in individual business decisions has led to some misunderstanding. When the COVID-19 public health emergency was declared on March 17th, many businesses were identified as essential services and were required to remain open so that citizens could access the goods and services they needed to maintain the basic necessities of life. ‘Personal service’ establishments were ordered closed, while all other businesses were issued guidance on how they should conduct their businesses, if they chose to remain open.

As a result, many businesses that closed initially have now considered their options, implemented new safety procedures and re-opened. This is well within provincial COVID-19 guidelines, which state:

“The Public Health Officer (PHO) has ordered some types of businesses to close. Any business or service that has not been ordered to close and is also not identified on the essential service list may stay open if they can adapt their services and workplace to the orders and recommendations of the PHO.”

The table on the following page summarizes what I observed while visiting businesses in our community this past week.

Please note that there are many additional examples of businesses and adaptations that have been implemented in our community.

The businesses and adaptations listed on the next page are meant to demonstrate the variety of stores that are open, the different types of customer services they are providing, and the steps they are taking to comply with the Public Health Officer’s orders and guidance.



SUMMARY OF ADAPTATIONS BY COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES IN GIBSONS*		
Type of Business	Nature of Adaptations	Other
Coffee Shop	Physical distancing; separate entrance and exit doors, if possible; take-out only; limited number of customers in the store	Wait outside for order if necessary; cream-sugar-etc. managed by staff; prefer debit or credit card payment
Grocery Store	Limited number of customers in store; line up outside; social distancing markers on the floor; accepting online and phone orders; delivery option; plexiglass screens at tills; customers pack own bags; sanitizing carts and surfaces	If you bring a re-usable bag, please keep it in your cart; carts are cleaned/sanitized after use; prefer debit or credit card payment; some staff wearing face masks
Beer & Wine Store	Line-up outside; limit number of customers inside store; social distancing marks; plexiglass barrier between cashier and customer	Prefer debit or credit card payment
Restaurant	Take-out only; delivery option; phone orders for pick-up	Some reduced hours of operation
Hardware Store	Phone orders to be picked up outside; delivery of large products	
Thrift Stores and Consignment Clothing Store	Closed and not accepting donations	Salvation Army; Community Services; Diabetes drop off at recycling depot
Small Commercial Store	No entry to store; debit or credit card only; staffed barrier at door	
Personal Service Stores	Closed by Provincial Order	Hairdresser, nail salon, barber shop, tattoo artist
Pharmacies	No or limited access into store by customers; phone orders and delivery available in some cases	Debit or credit card payment; regular sanitizing
Clothing stores	Most remain closed to the public with access available by appointment; some offering on-line orders and curbside pick-up	
Furniture Stores	Closed; on-line ordering and pickup available; accepting appointments to shop for specific items	
Brewery/Pub	2 breweries are providing take-out service only; one has added hand sanitizer as a product	



SUMMARY OF ADAPTATIONS BY COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES IN GIBSONS*		
Type of Business	Nature of Adaptations	Other
Recycling Depot	Managing traffic in and out of the site to limit number of people on the lot at one time; recommend that people sort before they come, to save time	Book bin for drop off only
Garden Shop	Accepting phone orders and pick-up; controlled entry to property	

What’s Next:

In the coming days and weeks, the federal and provincial governments and the Public Health Officer will provide additional COVID-19 updates, as well as information about the likelihood of future re-occurrences of the coronavirus in our communities.

In addition, we expect new guidance will be issued with respect to the way we conduct ourselves and the importance of getting out in the community and having social contact with others. We are all anticipating the day when we can safely travel to visit family and friends or freely visit loved ones who live close by.

However, what we do next as a community must be done with the knowledge that this pandemic is not over and that a second, or even third, wave is possible. We must not become over-confident and we must not stop complying with those oh-so-familiar public health guidelines - maintain physical distancing, keep up frequent hand washing and sanitizing, self-isolate if you show symptoms of illness, avoid unnecessary travel and stay home as much as possible.

In addition, it is critical that we all learn from this experience and become better prepared as individuals, families, businesses and as a community to be self-sufficient and keep safe during any emergency. If you do not yet have an emergency plan – make one now! If you do not yet have a 72-hour emergency kit – make one now! Step-by-step information about how to do these things is readily available on-line at:

- www.getprepared.gc.ca - “Your Emergency Preparedness Guide”
- www.redcross.ca – Emergency Plan Template
- www2.gov.bc.ca – Emergency Management Toolkit

In closing, I ask that you please keep doing what you’re doing. To date, Gibsons is faring as well as could possibly be expected – let’s maintain that! By working together, supporting each other, continuing to social distance, washing our hands often and sanitizing common touchpoints, we can continue to keep our community safe.

On behalf of Gibsons Council,

Mayor Bill Beamish
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