

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

We know that some of you were shocked by yesterday's Community Update. This is understandable, but if you look at what is happening around the world right now and even in our province, there is no doubt that we are currently facing the biggest challenge that any of us have ever faced in our lifetime. Period. Full stop.

COVID-19 has no cure and while most people only experience mild symptoms, a significant number of people will have severe symptoms. If we don't act now to contain COVID-19, Canada stands to lose more people than were lost in both world wars combined. This is not something to be taken lightly, every single one of us will lose someone we know and care about if things don't change.

Most of you are aware of the devastation that COVID-19 is wreaking across the planet. Our provincial numbers suggest that we are on the same trajectory as Italy, just a few weeks behind. The good news is that we still have time to act before it's too late.

Unfortunately, it appears that we have come to the limit of what we can do with voluntary preventive measures. While most of you (us) have been doing everything that we have asked this past week, many people are still not practising social distancing and staying out of public places to the degree that is needed to contain COVID-19.

Today we are sending a letter to Dr. Bonnie Henry, the Provincial Health Officer, to ask her to enact emergency measures that will enforce the measures that we have been advocating. We believe this is the only way that we will get sufficient numbers of people to practise the social distancing that is required to slow this pandemic down.

If further emergency measures are implemented, you will still be able to go out for essential tasks such as seeking medical care and picking up groceries, so please do not rush out to the grocery store. Supplies of essential goods are still coming in and shortages are not anticipated. Please order online or by phone and use paid or volunteer delivery services whenever possible.

We are tremendously thankful for all the support that we have received from the community and our colleagues, and are encouraged and amazed by the courageous and creative spirit that we see in our community. We are thankful for the leadership and support we have received from our hospital administrators and from Vancouver Coastal Health; thanks to their tireless efforts and those of our colleagues and other healthcare workers, we are well ahead of many other small communities and we hope this will give us a fighting chance to help our community.

Please help to conserve the energy and time of our hospital administration by only calling the hospital if you have a medical concern. Our administrators and administrative staff are crucial to the success of our efforts and are going above and beyond to ensure that we are as prepared as we can be.

We hope that as we face the difficult road ahead, that we will stand together and work together to protect and support our most vulnerable friends and neighbours; that we will be strong and brave in the midst of difficult circumstances; and that we will seize each moment as it comes with fierce determination and a belief in the good things that wait for us beyond this pandemic.

We will cry together, as many of us already have; we will believe in each other, as many of us already do; and we will come out on the other side stronger than we can even imagine now.

But perhaps that is talk for another time. Right now we need to focus on what we need to do. Practise social distancing, encourage all your friends and neighbours to do the same. Stay home unless you have a medical emergency or provide an essential service. Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, and don't touch your face unless you have washed your hands thoroughly.

If you develop cold or flu symptoms, self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms. It's not easy but it may save the life of someone you know and care about. If you develop symptoms severe enough to think you need to be admitted to hospital, call 911.

If you develop cold or flu symptoms that you believe are severe enough to warrant assessment by a doctor but not bad enough to call an ambulance, call or text the Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252, or send an email to coastrespclinic@gmail.com.

Please check the Coast Reporter website regularly for updates on COVID-19 in our community, and tune in daily on Eastlink Community TV at 5:30, 7:30 and 10:00 p.m. Also stay tuned to Coast FM for breaking news on COVID-19.

Please visit the Gibsons, Sechelt and SCRD websites for daily updates regarding community services and our local response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Keep well, wash your hands, keep your distance, and stay at home unless you have a medical emergency or another essential task!

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

-Dr Jennifer Baxter
-Dr Herman Mentz
-Dr Daren Spithoff

-Dr Ted Krickan
-Dr Brian Nelson