

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

This will be our last update for the week. As we wait to see the effects of our current measures, we are planning to decrease the frequency of our updates starting next week. If there are any changes in our local COVID-19 situation during that time, we will update you as soon as we are able to do so.

As noted in yesterday's Community Update, the next two to four weeks will be a critical time period and it is imperative that we all continue to practice social distancing measures during this time.

Our next steps beyond that will depend on how successful we are in containing COVID-19. We don't want to put ourselves in a situation where we relax precautions too early and see a spike in infections, so it is likely that social distancing recommendations will be in place for a number of weeks, if not months.

At the same time, we believe that widespread point of care testing is a valuable tool that would allow early detection and containment of COVID-19 infections. While point of care testing is not yet available in Canada, this testing has been developed elsewhere, and we are continuing to advocate for this at the regional health authority, provincial and federal levels.

In terms of our local preparation, our medical community has been hard at work changing the way we operate in order to minimize the spread of COVID-19 right now, while preparing for everything up to potential worst-case scenarios.

Our local medical clinics have shifted to providing most care by virtual means. Each doctor has taken on a specific subset of work responsibilities to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the hospital, clinics, long-term care facilities, and other places that we work.

We have opened the Respiratory Assessment Clinic, to assess patients who have more severe cold and flu symptoms, and may require hospitalization, as well as to provide swabs for symptomatic health care workers and high-risk patients. Sechelt Hospital is now restricted access, with visitor restrictions and limited entry points. Wards in the hospital have been reconfigured to allow for the complete separation of COVID-19-free patients and COVID-19 positive patients when and if they arrive. Staff have also been reassigned, so that nurses and other health care workers who care for COVID-19 patients will not work in any other areas of the hospital. Protocols have also been put in place to help protect our staff and community from inadvertent transmission of COVID-19 in the hospital setting.

Our long-term care facilities are also restricted access, with visitors restricted to palliative situations or essential visits only. One dedicated physician has been assigned to each long-term care facility, to help minimize the risk of infection amongst our most vulnerable.

Elsewhere in the community, many people are working on various aspects of our community pandemic response to ensure that we can support each other as effectively as possible through this difficult time. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered their time, energy, passion and supplies to help with these efforts!

If you are looking for ways to get involved, please keep an eye on the SCRDC, Gibsons and Sechelt websites for more information. We need all the help that we can get!

Moving forward, please continue to practise social distancing and encourage everyone around you to do the same. Self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms if you develop even mild cold or flu symptoms.



If you develop more severe cold or flu-like symptoms and feel you need to see a doctor, please call or text our new **Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252** or email <mailto:coastrespclinic@gmail.com>. If your symptoms are severe enough to require an ambulance to get to hospital, call 911.

The Respiratory Assessment Clinic is open seven days a week from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. Please note that this clinic is only for people living on the Sunshine Coast and that it is by appointment only.

Please check the Coast Reporter and the Local Weekly websites 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 PM. Also stay tuned to Coast FM for breaking news on COVID-19.

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

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Dr. Ted Krickan
Dr. Herman Mentz
Dr. Brian Nelson
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