

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

As we start to see glimmers of light at the end of the tunnel, with our education minister hoping that students will be able to return to school before the end of the year and the COVID-19 curve continuing to flatten across the province, it is a good time to start thinking about how and when we start moving back towards a more normal way of life.

Two days ago, the World Health Organization released its COVID-19 Strategy Update, which identified a number of criteria that will be key to easing restrictions. These criteria include controlling transmission so that the number of new cases remain “at a level that the health system can manage”; having the ability to rapidly detect and isolate all new COVID-19 cases; minimizing outbreak risk in long-term care facilities to protect our most vulnerable; establishing preventive measures in workplaces so that people can return to work safely; reducing the risk of imported cases through early detection and isolation; and engaging communities in the ongoing protective measures required to contain COVID-19 moving forward.

At the present time, we appear to be doing well in a number of these areas. With most people in B.C. adhering to social-distancing measures, we appear to be close to controlling transmission and fortunately have not overwhelmed our hospitals. Although we have had a number of outbreaks in long-term care facilities across the province, we have implemented numerous measures to protect our elderly, and have not seen the widespread outbreaks seen in other provinces.

On the Sunshine Coast, many of our businesses have made adjustments to protect workers and clients, which have allowed as many people as possible to continue working. As restrictions start to lift, we will need to be creative about how we implement protective measures while keeping our businesses going. We will also need to keep up the incredible work that we have been doing as a community to make sure that we ease restrictions in a way that does not compromise the safety of our most vulnerable.

Although it will require some more time to confirm that community transmission is indeed under control (especially after the recent long weekend), we should have a pretty good idea about this by early May. Assuming that we see data confirming this, it looks like our next steps will hinge on our ability to rapidly test and isolate people. Progress is being made in this area, with a new testing system approved by Health Canada earlier this week and efforts being made to develop this capacity in B.C. as well.

So what does this all mean for the Sunshine Coast? It means that the current restrictions will likely continue for at least a few more weeks, but that there is a possibility that we will be able to start lifting restrictions in the relatively near future. Of course, this will depend on our continued success with social distancing and will likely happen slowly, with time required between each step to ensure that we don't move too quickly.

With that in mind, as we start to move forward, we should also be prepared for the possibility that restrictions may tighten again in the future, should there be evidence of increasing COVID-19 activity. This will be a process, but if we all continue to do our part, we should be able to minimize the effects of COVID-19 until such time as a safe and effective vaccine and/or treatment is developed.

Coming back to the here and now, we want to remind everyone to call their family doctor if you develop cold or flu symptoms and go into self-isolation. If you do not have a family doctor, please call the Respiratory Assessment Clinic to let us know. You will receive a follow-up call within 24 to 48 hours to ensure that you do not need to be assessed further. The reason for this shift is that there have been a number of cases on the Lower Mainland where people who initially had mild symptoms subsequently declined rapidly at home and did not make it.



Please remember that returning travellers must self-isolate for 14 days from the date of return, and everyone with even mild cold or flu symptoms must self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the onset of symptoms (with or without a travel history).

Recently updated guidelines now state that self-isolation must be extended past 10 days if fevers have not been resolved for at least 72 hours and if symptoms (other than a dry cough) persist at 10 days. Self-isolation guidelines are available at the [BC CDC](#) website

If you develop more severe cold or flu-like symptoms and feel you need to see a doctor, or your symptoms have not improved after five to seven days, please call or text the 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.

Please note that the Respiratory Assessment Clinic is open seven days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and is intended for people living or staying on the Sunshine Coast.

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 p.m. The SCR and the Town of Sechelt are also putting out regular COVID-19 emergency updates with community-specific information on local government services.

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

#### **The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force**

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

-Dr Ted Krickan  
-Dr Brian Nelson

