

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

As we see pressure mount to reopen our businesses, schools and community, it is crucially important that we do it at the right time and in the right way. While the current COVID-19 restrictions are difficult for many of us on multiple levels, they are also the most important tools that we have to fight the COVID-19 pandemic right now.

Over the next few weeks, our new COVID-19 testing policy should give us a better idea of how many people are actually infected with COVID-19 in our community and our province. Hopefully this will help us find a path forward that minimizes the risk of widespread infection, while allowing a slow but steady return towards normal.

In the meantime, our current information indicates that it is still far too early to ease restrictions. Over this past week, a number of new outbreaks have been identified in the lower mainland, including two hospitals, two poultry plants and one nursing home. Provincewide, our numbers of new cases and new deaths have remained steady; this is encouraging in that our numbers are not escalating, but it is also a warning that COVID-19 continues to spread.

Now that we are testing everyone who has COVID-19 symptoms, we should be able to get a more accurate picture of what is happening in our community and across the province. It will take a few weeks to develop that picture, but hopefully the data will reveal that the community numbers are low enough to start planning our next steps.

Although we do not have numbers for the Sunshine Coast, we can confirm that we have had patients with COVID-19 in our hospital and in our community over the past few weeks. Likewise, we are seeing a steady stream of people with potential COVID-19 symptoms through the Respiratory Assessment Clinic. We expect to see our testing numbers increase significantly with the new testing guidelines, but we are hopeful that our local data will be reassuring.

We cannot take reopening our community lightly or move too quickly, as there are significant risks to doing this, risks that far outweigh the economic impact of our current restrictions. We need to have a solid plan for moving forward that has the flexibility to step back if and when this is needed. This plan will need to be backed by robust data about COVID-19 in our province and our community, and we will all need to work closely together to be successful.

If our community's commitment, creativity, and apparent success to date is any indication, we should be able to open up the Sunshine Coast slowly, progressively and safely when the time is right.

That being said, we were concerned to see our local RCMP posting a report that essential service workers had been treated poorly. This is a stressful time for all of us, but that just makes it all the more important for all of us to be patient, thoughtful, respectful, helpful, kind and caring towards each other.

We know that most people in our community are doing this, and doing everything you can to support and protect our amazing community. We deeply appreciate all that is being done, and all the sacrifices that each and every one of you are making. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!



In the coming weeks, we would ask you all to continue to hold the line on COVID-19. Stay at home unless you have an essential reason to be out (exercise/activity is essential), wash your hands frequently, and do not touch your face unless you have just washed your hands. Please do not have anyone outside your household in your home. If you do have to go out in public places, please stay at least two meters away from people who are not part of your household and consider wearing a facemask.

If you develop mild cold or flu symptoms, please contact your family doctor or the Respiratory Assessment Clinic to arrange for testing and assessment. You will be required to self-isolate until you are cleared.

If your COVID-19 test comes back positive, you will need to continue self-isolating, as will your recent contacts. Public Health will follow up with you and your contacts to arrange for further assessment and testing where necessary. Self isolation guidelines are available at [BC CDC](https://www.bccdc.ca)

If you develop more severe cold or flu-like symptoms and feel you need to see a doctor, 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, please call 911.

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

We have recently seen a number of people in the Emergency Department who delayed seeking care until they were sick enough to be hospitalized. Please remember that our local medical clinics and emergency department remain open (and safe) to see anyone who needs medical care. Please do not hesitate to contact your family doctor if you have concerns about your health. If you do not have a family doctor, please call your nearest medical clinic, as each clinic is providing virtual care for people in this situation.

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. 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