

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

With another long weekend upon us and steps being taken to ease some COVID-19 restrictions, it's a good time to remind everyone how important the next few months will be as we continue to fight this global pandemic. The positive changes happening over the next few days and weeks are a credit to the work that our community and our fellow British Columbians have done, but do not mean that we can let our guard down.

As with any situation where early success is achieved, it is easy to become complacent and lose sight of why. In our situation, early success has been based on a little bit of luck and the efforts of many many people to stay home, wash hands and maintain social distancing. Sustained success will depend on all of us continuing to work together, to support each other, and to protect each other.

Over the next week, [BC's Restart Plan](#) will move into Phase Two, with Provincial Parks opening up for day use tomorrow. Starting next week, safe interactions with extended family members are being encouraged and gatherings of up to six non-related people will also be allowed

As with most of the measures implemented over the past two months, we are being asked to do this on a voluntary basis and there are minimal rules or laws in place to enforce compliance. With this freedom, each of us needs to take personal responsibility for doing everything we can to protect ourselves and our community.

In keeping with this, we would recommend that everyone on the Coast continue to take every precaution as we expand our social circles again. Try to minimize unnecessary trips out of the house. When meeting up with others, do so as safely as possible: meet outdoors, maintain at least two meters between yourself and others, wash your hands frequently, and consider wearing a mask. If we continue to do these things, we will increase the chances of avoiding a major COVID-19 outbreak on the Coast.

Starting next Tuesday, various businesses and facilities are being encouraged to begin reopening with protocols for protecting employees, clients and visitors in place. If you run a business on the Coast, we would encourage you to work closely with [WorkSafeBC](#) and the [Public Health Office](#) to ensure that you are doing everything you can to protect your clients and employees as things start to open up.

More specific to the upcoming long weekend, please stay close to home and avoid travel to other communities. Our Public Health office and BC Ferries continue to recommend essential travel only. As we begin to open up, there is increased opportunity for wider spread of COVID-19, and we need to take this slow and easy.

If our numbers remain low over the next few weeks, it will open the door to further easing of restriction. However, if our numbers start to climb again (as we are seeing in places that have started opening up elsewhere in the world), we need to be prepared to close things back down again. This is not something to be rushed!

If you live elsewhere and are thinking about visiting the Coast this weekend, we would ask you to reconsider your plans and stay close to home. We are a small community with limited health resources and a significant number of people at higher risk for COVID-19 complications. We have worked hard over the past two months to successfully avoid a COVID-19 outbreak on the Sunshine Coast and we would appreciate it if you respected that work and our safety by staying home this weekend.

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We know that many of us who live here were frustrated by those who went against recommendations and visited the Sunshine Coast on the long weekend last month. We would encourage you to treat those who do choose to visit with respect and kindness, even if you strongly disagree with their choice. Part of what makes our community a place that people want to visit is the incredible spirit that is found up and down the Coast, and we shouldn't let the poor decisions of a few affect that.

As many of you are aware, Sechelt Hospital is starting to slowly move towards opening up as well. We are doing our best to maintain a safe environment for patients and staff members and will be maintaining ongoing precautions to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak in our hospital. Unfortunately, this does mean that visitor restrictions are still in place at Sechelt Hospital and our long term care facilities, so visits from friends and family members will have to remain virtual for now.

For those of you awaiting surgery locally, you have been or will be contacted shortly to confirm that you are ready, willing and able to proceed. We will be restarting elective surgeries as of next week and hope to be back to full capacity by mid-June at the latest.

As announced by Dr. Henry this week, the BCCDC has released an online [COVID-19 Survey](#) to get a better understanding of British Columbians' experience with COVID-19. You will be able to sign up for blood testing to test for COVID-19 exposure and immunity, as well as future technology-enhanced detection and tracing tools.

As noted in previous updates, early detection of COVID-19 infection remains critical to preventing outbreaks in our community. We are currently testing everyone who develops any new cold or flu symptoms, no matter how mild. You should still be [self-isolating](#) in your home while you await testing results.

So if you do develop [possible COVID-19 symptoms](#), please contact your family doctor or call or text the Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252 or email coastrespclinic@gmail.com. The Respiratory Assessment Clinic will be closed on Victoria Day (May 19th) but is generally 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.

If you haven't already done so, please show your support for local healthcare workers by participating in the [Walk for your Healthcare Provider](#) event that wraps up on May 14. Please take a 20 - 30 minute walk (while social distancing) and post your pictures on social media with the hashtag #scwalk2020 or email your pictures to admin.scdofp@divisionsbc.ca to be post on the Sunshine Coast Division of Family Practice [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages. All pictures go into a draw to win #scwalk2020 walk for Health T-Shirt's.

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. As local parks, programs and facilities begin to open up, please visit the [SCRD](#) and the [District of Sechelt](#) website for updates.

Keep well, wash your hands, keep your distance, and please keep doing everything you can to keep our community safe!

Sincerely,

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

- Dr Jennifer Baxter

- Dr Ted Krickan

- Dr Herman Mentz
- Dr Daren Spithoff

- Dr Brian Nelson

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Task Force Community Update #26
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