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To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"
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Date: 3/12/2020 8:28:17 PM
Subject: COVID-19 update; 8:30PM

Good evening Mayor and Council,

I am writing to provide a further update on our response to the COVID-19 outbreak and developments over the past 12 hours.

As per my previous note, the Provincial Health Officer has issued a new set of directives to limit the potential for community transmission. In accordance with that direction, Sadhu has confirmed that events in City facilities involving more than 250 people will be cancelled or postponed. Civic Theatres will be significantly impacted, with two performances cancelled this evening.

Beyond large gatherings subject to the explicit prohibition, our operational leaders are reviewing all events and public-facing programs and applying a risk assessment framework provided by Public Health Agency of Canada. Based on that assessment, we may implement further operational adjustments, closures or postponements. We will keep Council apprised of those changes.

Effective immediately, any staff members returning from travel outside Canada will be subject to 14-day self-isolation period. We are currently working through a number of questions regarding compensation for staff who do not have access to paid sick leave benefits and are in contact with other Metro municipalities on their approach to those issues. With the disruption in operations at VCT, we are also reviewing the impact on our staff in that department and their incomes.

As you have heard, we previously discontinued all work-related international travel for staff. Effective today, that ban has been extended to all work-related travel in Canada, except only travel within the region or by personal vehicle.

We are accelerating our transition to remote work and asking staff to avoid in-person meetings as far as is practical.

In terms of our public communications, we are focused on expanding our proactive efforts across all channels. The significant developments over the course of the day today created complexity in relation to maintaining our proactive communication but we are expanding the communications staff dedicated to the EOC to support the pace and demands.

I understand that there are ongoing concerns regarding support for vulnerable residents in the DTES and other neighbourhoods and we share that concern. ACCS is focused on ensuring the continuity of the City's current services to that population and is also working closely with BC Housing, NFP agencies and advocates in the DTES to address the significant gaps in response to the pandemic. We will provide Council with additional detail as plans are finalized.

We are also aware of various requests for financial support from the City to individuals, businesses and organizations impacted by the pandemic and we expect that the calls for financial help will expand in the coming days and weeks. Our Finance team is modelling the projected implications for revenues and costs and we will share that analysis with Council as it progresses. However, at this point, we expect that the financial impact on the City will be significant, undermining the City's fiscal capacity to absorb incremental costs. We have not received any information to suggest the recent funding package announced by the federal government will include direct support to local government.

We will provide further updates tomorrow and ongoing. If there are any urgent questions or concerns, please let me or Sadhu know.

Best,

Paul

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.