

For immediate release
March 23, 2020

Metro Mayors ask Province to provide urgent COVID-19 fiscal support to cities, relief for renters and landlords

Metro Vancouver, BC; March 23, 2020 – Mayors from across Metro Vancouver are jointly calling on the Province of British Columbia to provide measures to support cities facing strained budgets, as well as relief to renters and landlords to support residents and municipalities in the fight against the spread of COVID-19.

The Mayors urged the Province to immediately:

1. Provide support to all renters and landlords and
2. Expand the Provincial Property Tax Deferment Program; and,
3. Standardize and extend the due date for other tax authority levies.
4. Provide direct, unconditional grants to cover revenue losses;

On supports for renters and landlords, White Rock Mayor Darryl Walker said, “In Metro Vancouver where rents are among the highest in the country, we are asking the Province to prohibit evictions. As well, we urge the provincial government to work with Ottawa to provide support to those renters in financial difficulty and unable to pay rent. That way we can better ensure small landlords with mortgage helpers are able to maintain their homes.”

On property tax deferment, City of North Vancouver Mayor Linda Buchanan said, “Small businesses are reeling in our communities, but we currently have no way to offer much needed property tax relief. Expanding the existing Provincial Property Tax Deferment Program to cover all residents, businesses, and non-profits would provide peace of mind and could save many of them from closing permanently.”

On extended due dates, Burnaby Mayor Mike Hurley said, “We need the province to provide a due date extension for taxes we collect for them and other authorities such as Metro Vancouver. This will help us give people in our community extra time to pay their property taxes. We can’t absorb those costs, but neither can we ask low-income residents and small businesses to meet payment deadlines.”

On unconditional grants to cities, Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart said, “Cities across the Metro Vancouver region are under extreme pressure to coordinate local emergency responses, maintain essential services, and provide financial relief to

impacted local businesses and taxpayers. With limited funding sources, we need direct, unconditional grants now to relieve our fiscal pressure and maintain the essential services required to keep people safe.”

The four aid measures were detailed in a letter signed by 20 Metro Vancouver mayors that was sent earlier today to Premier John Horgan and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Selina Robinson.

Quick Facts

- Local governments cannot run a deficit or borrow to balance operating budgets.
- 80% of local government operating budgets are funded from property tax and utility fees.
- The current municipal and provincial orders in effect are greatly reducing local government revenue.
- Local governments collect taxes according to set dates on behalf of other taxing authorities including: the Provincial, TransLink, Metro Vancouver, the BC Assessment Authority, the Municipal Finance Authority BC, and other regional bodies.
- The Residential Tax Deferment Program currently covers seniors, surviving spouses, persons living with disabilities, and families with children. It does not extend to other types of residential property owners, businesses, or non-profits.

- 30 -

For further information, contact:

City of Burnaby
Mayor Mike Hurley
604-294-7340
mayor@burnaby.ca

City of Vancouver
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff
604-754-7632

City of North Vancouver
Tamara Connor, Research and
Communications Specialist
778-836-4330

City of White Rock
Mayor Darryl Walker
604-541-2131
dwalker@whiterockcity.ca