

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE REPORT

To: Board of Directors, Central Coast Regional District

From: Courtney Kirk, CAO; Matthew Wheelock, Deputy R-EOC Director

Meeting Date: April 9, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE SPECIAL REPORT

Recommendation:

THAT the Board of Directors of the Central Coast Regional District receives the report.

Summary:

On March 9, 2020 Canada confirmed its first COVID-19 related death. The World Health Organization characterized the COVID-19 disease spread as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. In the time since, statistics have been mounting of the spread and mortality of COVID 19 in British Columbia, Canada and throughout the world.

As of this writing the global statistics are:

- Confirmed cases (global): 1,439,013
- Confirmed deaths (global): 85,587
- Countries with cases: 216

(source: World Health Organization)

As of this writing the Canadian statistics are:

- Confirmed cases (Canada wide): 18433
- Confirmed deaths (Canada wide): 401

(source: World Health Organization)

As of this writing the British Columbia statistics are:

- Confirmed cases (British Columbia): 1291
 - 487 in Fraser Health
 - 130 in Interior Health
 - 81 in Island Health
 - 23 in Northern Health
 - 615 in Vancouver Coastal Health
- Confirmed deaths (British Columbia): 48

(source: British Columbia Centre for Disease Control)

The Health Authority of Canada describes the pandemic as at an earlier stage within Canada compared to some other countries, thereby allowing the opportunity to prepare the health care system and control the epidemic (rate and degree of spread), through the oft repeated goal of ‘flattening the curve’.

CCRD’s Board of Directors continues to advocate for stronger travel restriction measures and continues to elevate concerns to higher levels of government regarding the vulnerabilities of central coast populations to the worst outcomes of COVID-19. CCRD Administration continues to support board/policy direction through the pandemic.

CCRD as a whole has monitored the progression of the pandemic from the time of the first cases in British Columbia and has continued to escalate its response in accordance with health authority and EMBC guidance. Below is a summary of key activities to date.

The Canadian Health Authority for Canada and the Provincial Health Authority for British Columbia are the lead agencies responding to the pandemic. Provincial and local authority activations (including CCRD’s) are to be understood as supportive activations to assist primary health authority leadership through the response.

The Provincial Health Officer for BC (Dr. Bonnie Henry):

- ***Is the senior public health official for BC***
- ***Is responsible for monitoring the health of the population of BC***
- ***Provides independent advice to the ministers and public officials on public health issues and on the need for public health related legislation, policies and practices***
- ***Works with the BC Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, and BC’s Medical Health Officers to fulfill their legislated mandates on disease control and health protection***

Attachments:

CCRD Sole March 22, 2020 (Suspended by BC on March 26, 2020)
CCRD Travel Restriction March 25, 2020 (Suspended by BC on March 26, 2020)
CCRD Board Emergency Meeting Minutes, March 22, 2020
CCRD Board Emergency Meeting Minutes, March 22, 2020
CCRD Regional Letter Re Travel Restrictions
CCRD Letter to Ministers

Board Emergency Policy Group Activity*:

- March 12, 2020 Regular CCRD Board meeting; CAO presentation on COVID-19 and potential impacts on CCRD, Board discussion of potential emergency and policy needs
- March 22, 2020 CAO Kirk calls CCRD Board to emergency meeting to consider declaration of SOLE (minutes attached)
- March 24, 2020 Board meets as a policy group to discuss emergency SOLE needs, consideration of necessity of potential regional travel restriction order
- March 25, 2020 Board meets as a policy group to discuss and review a draft regional travel restriction order
- March 25, 2020 Board meets as a policy group to discuss draft travel restriction order, then convenes an emergency meeting to resolve on authorizing regional travel restriction order (minutes attached)
- March 26, 2020 Board meets as policy group to participate in province wide local government meeting with Minister Robinson (MMHA) and Minister Farnworth (EMBC)
- March 26, 2020 Minister Farnworth suspends all states of local emergency in the province (including CCRD's); board meets as a policy group to discuss the suspension of the SOLE and thereby suspension of CCRD travel restriction order
- March 27, 2020 Board meets as a policy group to discuss the CCRD SOLE suspension/travel order suspension and strategize on next steps, collaborates on letter to Ministry noting concerns (letter attached)
- March 30, 2020 Scheduled (by resolution March 12) Meeting of the Board for the primary purpose of adoption of CCRD 5 year financial plan, 2020-2025, Board discusses provincial order amending legislation on public meetings to facilitate meetings by electronic means for the duration of the pandemic

**this list does not include activities of individual board members contributing to the pandemic response, details for which may be summarized in directors' area reports*

CCRD Pandemic Response (prepared by Matthew Wheelock, Deputy R-EOC Director):

Emergency Planning for Pandemics

One of the key challenges that the CCRD has faced in dealing with this pandemic is that pandemics are not included in the scenarios covered in our emergency plans, though a

placeholder was included in the CCRD 2018 updated plans for further collaboration and guidance from the health authority. Furthermore, no-one could have envisaged that essential all local authority EOCs throughout the province would be activated and operated concurrently, making for an unrepresented set of circumstances that we, like all concerned, are still working our way through.

Administrative Continuity and Remote Working

The CCRD activated its regional EOC in the afternoon of Tuesday March 18th. Thanks to the diligence and hard work of our staff and the support of our IT company (in Williams Lake), CCRD staff began to work virtually from Friday March 21st.

Supporting Central Coast Communities and EOCs

The CCRD Regional EOC (R-EOC) has held support calls with emergency representatives of Denny Island, Ocean Falls and Wuikinuxv and has been in regular communication with the Heiltsuk and Nuxalk Nations.

Establishing a coordinated way forward for the Bella Coola valley with the Nuxalk Nation has not been as straightforward as might have collectively been envisaged with our shared emergency coordinator function. However, the current reality is one that was not planned for and all concerned are all still learning and moving forwards.

CCRD Essential Services

Key CCRD services (such as TCWRC and Bella Coola Airport) remain open and functional. The transfer station has had to make some changes to ensure the safety of staff working with potentially hazardous materials, but the core refuse disposal service continues and to date has been relatively unaffected.

Non-CCRD Essential Services

Borex (and the MOWI fish farm) in Ocean Falls were the cause of concern for some residents regarding their staff changeovers and the risk of bringing the virus into the community. As Borex provides power to Denny Island, Bella Bella and Ocean Falls it has been deemed an essential service. MOWI is also continuing with carefully controlled staffing isolation protocols and reduced changeovers.

Food delivery services have been identified as needing support as Wuikinuxv members have expressed concern about food orders not having been fulfilled, with those applying the rationing perhaps not appreciating the extent of Rivers Inlet's remoteness.

Bella Coola Valley Bandwidth Challenges

With the need for employees of almost all business and organisations to now work from home, coupled with the need for the remote teaching of school children and residents now essentially home-bound, the toll on internet bandwidth demand was colossal. The R-EOC submitted an expenditure request to the province's EOC (PREOC) requesting an emergency temporary

upgrade to the valley's internet connectivity, which was declined. Our local ISP CCCS determined that the valley needed double the existing bandwidth to meet demand.

Telus and the planned Bandwidth upgrade for the Bella Coola Valley

Communication with the PREOC and CCCS's own engagement with Telus determined that the planned upgrade was scheduled for June of this year. We sought to have that date brought forward, but a Telus ban on staff travel, curtailed this hope. Telus is evaluating the possibility of a minor, temporary upgrade which we hope to hear back on soon.

The planned upgrade in June is still proceeding in spite of COVID-19 restrictions still expected to be in place. This requires Telus to bring in mobile accommodation, food supplies and other extraordinary measures to complete the work, which we are very grateful for.

States of Local Emergency and their Rescindment

First Nations through the central coast region declared States of Emergency, primarily as a means of restricting travel into their communities. The CCRD in consultation with communities also declared a statutory State of Local Emergency, only for it to be rescinded by the province within a few days. The loss of these exceptional powers now means that the CCRD lacks *Emergency Program Act* authority to impose travel restrictions. However, First Nations' states of emergency are still in force and are being used to restrict access and egress to indigenous lands.

Mortality Rate Modelling

In the absence of potential mortality rate modeling being made available to regions and communities, the R-EOC is exploring the possibility of engaging a local PhD to undertake some 'indicative' modeling for each of our five communities and the region as a whole. The R-EOC is in communication with health-related leadership in Bella Coola and Bella Bella to gauge their level of support for such an undertaking.

Information Distribution

One of the challenges that the R-EOC has been navigating is the best means of disseminating information from sources such as the PREOC, province and Vancouver Coastal Health, in addition to the R-EOC and First Nation EOCs and other sources. We are seeking to implement a process that does not leave out community members with no access to (or interest in) Facebook or smartphones.

This work is ongoing, but we have developed an information distribution channel guide that includes; the CCRD website, Facebook, email, noticeboards and letterboxes and that identifies and segments the relevant audience for each communique by locality.

Non-Compliance with Health Guidelines

Community members choosing not to comply with the physical distancing guidelines is a concern and one that is hard to address without the authority and means to do so.

Of graver concern are the numerous reports of visitors from within and without of the province and most concerning of all - from out of country entering our central coastal communities and not self-isolating; as is now required by law. In this last instance the RCMP are able to intervene, if they are informed.

Preparing for Provincial Mandates

The province has already mandated a number of projects to be completed including: an update to our emergency plans to include pandemics, a continuity plan to address ongoing CCRD operations during this time and a bylaw feasibility study to assess the practicality and necessary means to enforce provincial pandemic orders. We have already begun the process of actioning these requirements.

Further orders are expected and the CCRD is gearing up to implement them, as they come through.

Respectfully Submitted by: Courtney Kirk and Matthew Wheelock