March 24, 2020

Dear Mayors and CAOs:

Thank all of you who were able to join the call hosted by Minister Robinson and Minister Farnsworth yesterday. We’re following up on their behalf to share key messages from the call and to reiterate our offer to support you and your communities in dealing with the complex and ever-evolving challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We acknowledge that about 90 Mayors were not able to participate and hear this important update due to technology capacity issues. With so much of our business reliant on technology right now, we have real restrictions on capacity to meet all of governments needs, so we ask that for future calls, please heed our request not to forward conference call invitations and please only allow one dial-in from your local jurisdiction.

Below you will find some of the important information covered on the call to help ensure a coordinated approach to tackling the challenges during the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Working Together:

• We are dealing with an unprecedented emergency at a scale we’ve never seen. It is critical that we work together to ensure we’re best serving all British Columbians in this crisis. We’re in this together.

• We also know that local governments are on the front-line of responding to the COVID-19 emergency. We’ve seen extraordinary leadership in Mayors across the province and we want to continue to support you in your efforts and will be bringing forward a series of actions in the coming days.

• We also recommend key things you can do at this time:
  • In the face of uncertainty and volumes of misinformation, maintain a leadership role by modeling a calm and considered approach to messaging with your community and through your organization.
  • Connect with each other – you’re not in this alone and you have an extraordinary group of peers in the Mayors and CAOs of the Province. Work together to generate ideas and trouble-shoot issues.
• Continue to work hard to support your communities and ramp up education through things like increased public signage, street teams, or revised operational process that demonstrate how to meet Public Health Official (PHO) orders.

• Evaluate ways to expand your enforcement capacity and actions to help ensure compliance with pho orders, such as by redeploying underutilized staff for inspections and warnings, increasing fines for non-compliance, or partnering with your police force to increase warnings and ticketing.

• Communicate key issues, questions, or ideas you may have to the province in real time so we can understand your needs and respond immediately.

Provincial State of Emergency:

• Declaring a provincial state of emergency supports provincial response to COVID-19 and ensures that federal, provincial and local resources align in a joint, coordinated way to help protect British Columbians.

• This includes keeping supply chains safe, so people have access to essential goods and services such as food and medical supplies to keep society running – in all areas of the province.

• It also means making sure critical infrastructure is readily available to support provincial and community responses to COVID-19.

• The steps the Province is taking are informed by the direction and compliance of our Provincial Health Officer, and in support of an all of government approach to respond to COVID-19. The orders from the Provincial Health Officer are not suggestions – they are the law.

• You can find the list of orders and other COVID information at the following sites:
  • For more information about PHO orders and medical-related information, visit bccdc.ca
  • For more information about Provincial support and health information, visit gov.bc.ca/COVID-19.
  • For a list of orders and notices, the PHO Site.

• In coming days, Ministerial Orders will be issued to more effectively coordinate an all of government approach to COVID-19, and ensure effective coordination between the Province, federal government and municipalities to support COVID-19 response and recovery.
• To support these orders, the Province will make sure that facilities and businesses that have been ordered to close will remain closed. As well, the orders restricting gathers and respecting physical distancing are followed.

• Under the provincial state of emergency, the Province will make sure you have and are able to direct resources necessary to comply with the Provincial Health Officer’s orders as well as any orders issued by the Solicitor General.

We want to echo the thanks expressed by Ministers Robinson and Farnworth to all our partners in local governments including the workers who are delivering essential services. By working together, we can give comfort and guidance to British Columbians as we all face these challenging times.

Thank you,

Kaye Krishna                        Lori Halls
Deputy Minister                     Deputy Minister
Municipal Affairs and Housing       Emergency Management BC

cc:  Honourable Selina Robinson, Minister, Municipal Affairs and Housing  
     Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister and Solicitor General