May 20, 2020

Dear CAOs:

Thanks again for joining our calls last week to discuss the BC Restart Plan. This email serves as a summary follow-up of key themes and concerns raised on those calls from all local government CAOs.

You raised a variety of issues and questions, including: the process to access sector plans and guidance materials; the ability to access consistent public health and work safe advice; opportunities to establish provincial funding to assist local governments with the restart; and how to approach local compliance and enforcement in this next phase of COVID response. The following updates address these key themes:

**Sector Plans/Guidance:**

WorkSafeBC announced a series of updated industry guidelines and tools last Friday that support the transition into Phase 2 of our COVID-19 response. More industry specific guidelines and resources, including child care and recreation and sports, are expected to be available soon. Also, as other sector associations plans are established, they will be posted on the WorkSafeBC site. We recommend regular review of the site, and we will also send updates to local governments as we are made aware of new or updated plans.

As local governments, you are responsible for creating/updating your own transition and safety plans for the different aspects of your operations (office spaces, council meetings, public works projects, libraries, golf course, etc.). While it is not required for you to adhere to the published sector plan, it is recommended that you take advantage of them to inform your own safe restart plans. There are many resources available to ensure the sectors – and you - meet public health and safety standards of the Provincial Health Officer and WorkSafe BC. Please refer to the numerous links sent in my May 16 update to assist you: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/governance-powers/covid-19](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/governance-powers/covid-19). And as you develop your transition and safety plans for your local governments, know that your staff can also reach out to WorkSafe BC staff with questions regarding health and safety guidance, at 1-888-621-7233.

We know there may be some public pressure on local governments to restart all their activities quickly, but it is important to heed the guidance of Dr. Henry in moving cautiously through this transition, and the Province supports you as you plan and undertake a careful and safe restart to your lines of businesses. We also encourage you to consider coordinating your restart timing regionally and would be happy to support those discussions.

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**Provincial Funding:**

The Province continues to actively monitor the state of local governments finances – by staying in touch with you and your staff, by coordinating with the Ministry of Finance and by connecting with key partners such as the Municipal Finance Authority and UBCM. We also continue to hold discussions about support for local government with the Federal government. We will continue to evaluate the situation as we move through this transition and look forward to ongoing discussions with you in this regard.

**Compliance and Enforcement:**

The Province has adopted and maintains a graduated compliance and enforcement approach during the COVID emergency, with the enforcement end of that spectrum managed at the provincial level, specifically in regard to Provincial Health Orders. This graduated approach generally begins with providing information, education and advice as the first step, with escalating measured enforcement only as required and appropriate to meet public health and worker safety objectives.

Police and local bylaw officers may start to receive complaints regarding business that are re-opening, either in relation to compliance with public health orders or measures to meet the public health objectives that may seem to conflict with typical business regulation rules. When visiting a business due to a complaint, officers are encouraged to:

- Review the ‘Covid-19 safety plan’ developed by that sector and the individual business for the purpose of understanding and establishing general compliance.

- Where there is non-compliance with an establishment’s stated plans, or it is learned that the business has not produced a plan, identify the problem and encourage the business to make adjustments to their operations to achieve compliance.

- Support a balanced approach to maintain public trust to ensure businesses can re-open and operate while following Provincial Orders related to COVID-19. As with the existing Provincial Health Orders, police and local bylaw officers cannot issue violation tickets, require businesses to close, or otherwise take any enforcement action.

- Clarify whether enforcement concerns should be addressed by Work Safe BC. Generally speaking, issues that would have been related to Work Safe BC compliance and enforcement prior to COVID, will likely also fall within Work Safe BC jurisdiction during this time. Bylaw enforcement officers are encouraged to consult with or refer such matters to Work Safe BC.

- Reach out to address questions or seek clarity around enforcement authorities and actions:
  - For general guidance and support, local government staff can contact the COVID-19 Provincial Orders Support Team (POST) Call Centre toll-free at 1-833-309-4631.
  - WorkSafeBC prevention officers can be reached by calling 1-888-621-7233 (1-888-621-SAFE) or 604-276-3100 (Lower Mainland), Monday to Friday between 8:05 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. for non-urgent matters. Urgent matters, (including reports of unsafe work conditions and refusals of unsafe work), can be directed to the same numbers, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
We hope this information supports you and enables you to better navigate through the unprecedented pace and volume of information and change. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the regional MAH liaisons that support your teams if you have questions or would like to continue our discussion on transitioning to this next phase of the COVID response: [https://contacts.localgovernmentinformationsystem.gov.bc.ca/lgics.aspx](https://contacts.localgovernmentinformationsystem.gov.bc.ca/lgics.aspx).

Thanks again for your leadership and collaboration.

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