Mayor Ander’s statement on COVID-19

BOWEN ISLAND - For the first time, Bowen Island Municipality has made the difficult decision to close Municipal Hall to the public. We must do this to protect our staff, who will continue to provide essential services.

We are responding to recent developments in the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation is changing quickly, every day, and it is important to stay informed and up-to-date with the latest advisories and information. You can find accurate information and preparedness suggestions on our Municipal website at www.bowenislandmunicipality.ca.

We are following the advice of the provincial government and health authorities in guiding our operations during this public health emergency. We will continue to look to the health authorities for their guidance and will assess and update our protocols regularly, as necessary.

I encourage us all to trust our public health officials. They are some of the very best in the world and have trained their whole lives for an event like this. Please take their good advice and pass it on to others (http://www.vch.ca/) and (http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/)

We echo the advice of our health authorities, and ask that you please:

- Stay home if you are sick
- If you think you may have symptoms of coronavirus, call 8-1-1 for an assessment. Do not drop in to the local doctor’s office without calling first
- Good hygiene: Wash hands frequently with soap and water, cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing (such as coughing into your elbow or using a tissue)
- Avoid touching your face
- If you are returning from international travel, including the United States, please self-isolate (stay home) for 14 days
- Practise social distancing

As your local government, we are working to ensure we maintain essential services. Water, contractor services for garbage collection, and sewer services will continue to be operated. Our roads will be kept clear and accessible. We will continue to communicate with you as frequently as possible. However, some non-essential services may need to be scaled back in the coming weeks. Our staff are working from home as much as possible, but you can still contact us by phone 604-947-4255 or e-mail bim@bimbca.ca. Please understand if we can’t respond to your requests with our usual speed and efficiency.
We have cancelled some upcoming Municipal meetings and events that are non-essential, cancelled all community recreation programs, and are re-assessing our programs every day - all in order to keep our staff, volunteers, and community members safe, and in an effort to “flatten the curve.”

We are so pleased to see our community’s response to COVID-19. Many groups and organizations have voluntarily cancelled events to help increase social distancing. Others have reached out in support of those who are self-isolating or considering self-isolating. This level of caring and thoughtfulness is at the core of our island community and is the root of what makes Bowen Island such a safe place to live.

When things get tough, we pull together and take care of each other.

Our local businesses are working hard to ensure we continue to have much-needed supplies at hand. When shopping, please don’t buy more than you need. If you see someone buying a larger quantity, keep in mind, they’re probably shopping for multiple homes or families, perhaps friends or neighbours who are self-isolating. This is the time for compassion, not judgement.

One thing I know everyone loves about Bowen is their usual routine in the Cove, saying hello to our friends, neighbours, family members and everyone you pass with a smile. For now, let’s keep those social interactions to a wave and a smile, or a chat outside in the fresh air. Please try not to linger in the grocery stores or pharmacy to have a chat. These are now essential services and they are doing their best to keep their own staff safe so they can continue to support Bowen Island.

As we enter some difficult times, please think of our local businesses and give them your support. Our small businesses need our business very much right now. They have been here for us so far, and they will be here for us once this has passed. Let’s make sure we are here for them, because our local businesses are local families.

If you have an elderly neighbour, or someone who has medical issues, ask them if they’re okay, ask them if they need anything. Not everyone has access to the internet and accurate information. Some may be afraid. What can you do to help? Pick up groceries? Pick up medication? Take their dog for a walk? Babysit for a few hours?

We will make sure we keep you informed with regular updates on our response to COVID-19.

These are uncertain times, but I am certain that we will make it through this together, Bowen Island. Take care of yourselves, and let’s take care of each other, because that’s what we do here.

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