

March 16, 2020

To: All BC Local, Indigenous and Regional Governments

Re: Tips for Response and Recovery

As the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 earlier this week, the Canadian government announced a comprehensive response package to combat and mitigate the impacts of the outbreak in Canada. The Province of BC has also announced a number of initiatives and are providing regular briefings on the current status of the outbreak in our Province.

As a leader in Economic Disaster Recovery Programs in Canada, the British Columbia Economic Development Association (BCEDA) has earlier this week started to provide you with regular updates, along with links to important resources for local, Indigenous, and regional governments and the businesses that make up your economy. We encourage you to share this information with your businesses in an effort to keep everyone informed of the steps being taken to protect citizens, especially those most vulnerable. You can find important links to information included in our alerts on the BCEDA webpage – <https://www.bceda.ca/coronavirus.php>. We also encourage you to share the following two BCEDA resources as soon as possible to your local businesses:

[Planning for Coronavirus: A Guide for Businesses and Organizations](#)

[Coronavirus: Workplace and Employer Resources and Suggestions](#)

We want to keep you informed of the steps BCEDA is taking to be able to provide you with as many resources as possible, along with also providing you some tips to help in what will no doubt be a long economic recovery. The tips below are designed for various phases of this disaster – some are immediate and some you would implement once the declaration of the pandemic has been removed.

As always personal safety comes first and we encourage you to be aware of how you feel and how others around you feel. Without you the following can't be implemented. We also recognize that you have to look after everyone, not just businesses. Some of these tips are to help you do both.

1. **Increase the activation level of your EOC.** Depending on outbreaks you may need to bring your Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to full activation. Be prepared for this.
2. **Expand your volunteer network:** You can't do this alone and in some cases those that you have designated as being part of your EOC or EDC will not be in a position to help. Issue a call for volunteers and ask them in what areas they may be able to provide assistance. Simple things like even delivering groceries to those under self-quarantine can be perhaps best handled by volunteers.
3. **Establish clear communication protocols:** It needs to be very clear who is in charge of all communications regarding the steps being taken to ensure the safety of local residents and the

eventual recovery. Lack of communications can be the biggest threat towards response efforts and recovery.

4. **Establish Business Transition Teams:** A Business Transition Team can help to coordinate some of the activities in this list. These teams should be made up of businesses from the different areas of your community. If any community is going to establish a team, BCEDA will provide complimentary advice on structure and some tasks that they could do.
5. **Talk to your local financial institutions:** During this time, businesses and even consumers may find it difficult to make payments. Talk to your local financial institutions to see what they can do to help those in need. In most disasters, banks and credit unions will provide short term interest relief, interest only payments, etc. Encourage them to do so at this time.
6. **Do not forgot other disasters may happen:** While no one wants to be hit with multiple disasters we can't ignore the fact that other disasters may happen at any time. Floods, forest fires, and other natural or man made disasters may occur without notice and we need to be ready if that happens. Expanding your volunteer network is critical at this time to make sure that you have the ability to manage whatever it is you may face. Take an inventory of what could potentially be needed for volunteers as soon as possible.
7. **Expand Community and Business Transition Centres:** With the recent downturn in the forest industry, many communities will have established Community and Business Transition Centres. It would be wise to expand the services at these centres to provide information on the coronavirus, the current response from local and other levels of governments, other resource providers like Community Futures, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
8. **Expand your Business Retention and Expansion Program:** Local businesses are the lifeblood of the community. Without them, people do not have jobs, there is no place to get what you need, and people feel that life can't be normal. We need to take steps to communicate with our businesses to determine impacts, and collectively identify possible solutions for moving forward. Gathering information will also help to encourage supports to businesses by other levels of government.

While BCEDA does offer the BC BusinessCounts Program and will launch a specific Coronavirus module this week, it is only a suggestion. We recommend however, that the data you collect in talking with your businesses NOT be stored in Excel. It is an ineffective tool for long term tracking and for ease of reporting. Programs like BC BusinessCounts need to be used for data collection. The recovery will be long term and by having all of the information in one place, you can easily track your efforts and the results. Face to face meetings in small settings are not currently recommended, and while we usually never suggest telephone interview, it would be acceptable in this situation to conduct short business interviews by telephone. While normally it is suggested that economic developers do this you may need to consider using volunteers to help.

9. **Establish a shop local first program:** When citizens are ready to venture out, they should be encouraged to shop local. Many small entrepreneurs are either already struggling or will be struggling during these times. Remember even some of the franchise businesses in your community are local entrepreneurs. These are not corporate owned businesses but usually owned by someone who took a risk. Establish programs by working with Chambers of Commerce to encourage everyone to shop local and where possible support the small business community. Local Government can also establish a shop local first program to make sure any supplies are purchased locally where possible.
10. **Celebrate reopenings:** We will get through this. As British Columbians and Canadians we have ways of bouncing back stronger and better than before. But we always shy away from celebrating our successes. Now is no better time to change that. As restrictions start to ease and businesses start to reopen, celebrate them with simple things like ribbon cuttings, a cash mob, or some other activity that ensures that they get the publicity they will need to bring consumers back. Also celebrate major companies reopening. It is critical in times like that to remember that every business in your community regardless of size is important.
11. **Host street parties:** Once you can begin to bring groups together again, host street parties in your commercial areas. Work now on establishing a committee of retailers and other businesses to start working on events that can be put together in a timely manner once all restrictions have been lifted.
12. **Support BCEDA efforts: If you can help BCEDA keep communities informed, provide suggestions, or just help in spreading information** please let us know. We are a small association that gets little government support for the assistance we provide. While we will likely seek some support from government for additional programs our priority right now is you. We will, to the best of our ability, continue to keep you informed, and provide tips and tools to help you manage and eventually recover from the current situation. Please feel free to reach out if you need anything.

Sincerely,



Dale Wheeldon,
President and CEO



Ashleigh Volcz,
Director of Member Services