

NEWS RELEASE

Distributed April 30, 2020

Province and City to protect Nanaimo's vulnerable during COVID-19 crisis

Summary

The Province is leading the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which also includes addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in this crisis.

On March 30, the City fulfilled a provincial request to provide a list of City-owned facilities that might be suitable for use to shelter/self-isolate/care for homeless individuals during the pandemic.

In response to a request from BC Housing, the Province and the City have agreed to use a portion of 285 Prideaux Street (Community Services Building) to operate an Emergency Response Centre (ERC).

The ERC will operate out of existing vacant spaces and will require additional space as well. As a result, some tenants currently operating out of the Community Services Building will be relocating by June 1, 2020. The 7-10 Club and Options for Sexual Health will remain on site to serve the needs of the community and most vulnerable population. As an added extra measure to help the remaining tenants during these challenging times, on Monday, April 27, 2020, Nanaimo City Council granted temporary relief from lease and rental payments to organizations that occupy City facilities which have been closed and/or severely impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This relief extends to those operating out of the Community Services Building.

Scheduled to open in June, the Emergency Response Centre at 285 Prideaux Street will provide approximately 35 emergency shelter spaces for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. An experienced non-profit operator who has significant experience working with vulnerable populations will oversee the 24/7 day-to-day management of the emergency response centre. Additional details will be provided as the Emergency Response Centre becomes operational.

Community members with questions regarding the Emergency Response Centre at 285 Prideaux Street can reach out to BC Housing at communityrelations@bchousing.org. Media inquiries for BC Housing are to be sent to media@bchousing.org.

Strategic Link: The City of Nanaimo is committed to supporting the Province of BC during the COVID-19 pandemic to help keep Nanaimo a liveable and safe place for all.

Key Points

- The pandemic planning and response for the health and shelter needs for those who are homeless is being led jointly by Island Health and BC Housing, with support from the City of Nanaimo.
- The 7-10 Club will not be impacted and will remain operational at the Community Services Building. Options for Sexual Health will also remain on site, with reduced hours, providing only the essential services as per their March 17, 2020 COVID-19 update found here: <https://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/covid-19-update/>
- BC Housing is working with regional health authorities, municipal partners and experienced non-profit shelter and housing providers to develop community-based response plans to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes

identifying locations, including in Nanaimo, where vulnerable individuals, especially those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, could recover and self-isolate.

Quotes

"The COVID-19 health emergency is not limited to just Nanaimo and we understand that resources are being stretched across the Province. BC Housing and Island Health have been great partners to the City as both agencies are participating, and continue to participate, in the Council-led Health and Housing Task Force. We continue to rely on them during this pandemic to address the immediate health emergency as well as the ongoing mental health and addictions issues that face our community."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

"We are working with local governments and health authorities throughout the province to make sure spaces like these are available to help us mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and support people in need. We will continue to work with the City of Nanaimo and community partners across the province to build off the work already underway through our Homes for B.C. plan, to ensure people and communities are supported during this crisis and beyond."

Selina Robinson
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Government of British Columbia

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