

Newsletter March 26

Spring! Easing specific restrictions – Funding and pivot projects for arts, hospitality and tourism workers

Without a doubt, spring is here and with it, sunshine, renewal, rebirth, and coming out of the darkness. These themes are present in all the religious spring holidays. For our Jewish friends who will begin celebrations of Passover this weekend – all the best to you and your family. As well, spring break, Easter, Vaisakhi, and Ramadan are all here or coming up in the next weeks. Last year, it was difficult to manage the celebrations of these events. Dr. Henry has now provided new variance on existing orders that ‘turn up the dial’ on how we can get more interactions that we need, while still using all our COVID safety practices, and safely celebrate our spring religious observances.

Long term care visitations

Our residents in long-term care and their families have experienced a particularly difficult year and made incredible sacrifices. Everyone welcomes the news that, beginning April 1, all residents in long-term care and assisted living will be able to have frequent, routine opportunities for social visits. The easing of restrictions include: removing the requirement for a single designated social visitor, to now allow for additional family and friends to visit long-term care and assisted living residents; expanding the number of visitors, so up to two visitors, plus a child, will be allowed to visit at a time, allowing people to connect in small groups; changing the allowable location of visits, so family and friends can visit in residents’ rooms without staff present; and allowing physical touch between visitors and residents, provided appropriate infection prevention and control measures, like masks and hand hygiene, are in place. Find more details here: [Changes to long-term care visitation on the way | BC Gov News](#)

Religious gatherings outdoor and indoor

On March 23, 2021, the Provincial Health Officer issued a Variance of the Gathering and Events Order to religious communities for worship services, permitting these to take place outdoors with a limit of 50 **total persons** in attendance or otherwise participating. This order requires strict adherence to hygiene protocols, including rules around taking contact information, health checks, mask wearing, music, and distribution of food and drink which can be found here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-variance-outdoor-worship.pdf>

There was further variance issued by the Provincial Health Officer yesterday regarding indoor worship services, permitting the lesser of 50 people or 10% of the venue capacity to **gather on four dates selected by the faith community for the purpose of significant Holy Days between March 28 and May 13, 2021**. Local health authorities retain the ability to exclude areas where transmission is high. Find more details as they come available here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

Farmers market allowances

To celebrate spring and renewal in our planting year, the Farmers markets too have been granted allowances. Outdoor Farmers markets can now sell non-food merchandise and indoor farmers’ markets can now sell flowers, plants, seeds and compost in addition to food items (indoor markets are still restricted from selling non-food items). The Comox Valley Farmers market will be moving Mid April to the Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds, and so the love of local and sustainable food sources in Courtenay-Comox continues. For details on the Farmer’s market allowances click here:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/resource->

[gallery/Documents/Educational%20Materials/EH/FPS/Food/Farmers%20markets%20web%20site%20content.pdf](#)

Funding for Artists

Artist and Arts organizations, many of whom have been unable to host live events over the last year, will be receiving funding to help sustain their work. We know that the arts are such an important part of our mental health and so an additional \$16 Million in support for people, venues and organizations was announced this week. This includes \$14 million in new one-time supplements to 588 arts and culture organizations and an additional \$2 million to help 47 organizations improve their existing spaces. Recipients in the Comox Valley include the Comox Valley Art Gallery (\$43,400), Comox Valley Arts (\$22,000), Courtenay and District Museum (\$31,000), and CYMC (\$2,000).

Here is the link to the full news release: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021TACS0023-000526>

Tourism and Hospitality workers skills pivot to meet demand of vaccine roll out

The tourism and hospitality sector has been hit with many lay-offs. That why it makes sense to use the skills of these workers for the provinces' immunization initiatives. Tourism and hospitality businesses have already begun to call and train hundreds of staff who have been laid off due to the pandemic. Workers from these industries will provide their expertise and logistical support as non-clinical staff at immunization clinics to help move people through the clinics efficiently and safely. Many of these workers bring additional language skills as well. Find the full story here:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021PREM0022-000539> or hear what the CBC said about it:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/covid-19-immunization-plan-bc-1.5961768>

With the excitement of easing of specific restrictions and optimism towards the future, it is important to remember that this is a 'turning up the dial' not a full 'on switch'. We need to enjoy the new easing, but be smart not to waste our good work over the last year. To ensure this, higher fines for non-compliance of the orders have been announced. We cannot afford to lose our gains made in the last year, so let's make sure we continue to abide by the rules we know help keep us safe. For more details on the increased fines and monitoring, click here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021PSSG0031-000540>

My constituency office is available by phone or email. The office is open Monday to Thursday 10am-4pm, and Fridays by appointment only. You can reach us at 250.703.2410 or Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca if you have any questions or need assistance with provincial supports.

Sincerely,

Ronna-Rae Leonard

MLA Courtenay-Comox

COVID Resources:

- For medical info, visit bccdc.ca or call 811
- For provincial supports and BC's Restart Plan, visit gov.bc.ca/covid19 or call 1-888-COVID-19 (1-888-268-4319) or text 604-630-0300
- For employer guidelines on returning to work safely, visit WorkSafeBC
- Take the self-assessment at covid19.thrive.health
- For seniors looking for additional support, or for those looking to support seniors, call 2-1-1 or visit bc211.ca

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RonnaRaeLeonard/>

Instagram: @ronnaraeleonard

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYLQfuaKQV-itCluryo2hQg>

Website: <http://ronnaraeleonard.ca/>

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Ronna-Rae Leonard MLA for Courtenay-Comox

437 5th St, Courtenay BC

Ph: 250-703-2410

Community Office Hours: Monday to Thursday, 10 am to 4 pm

MY OFFICE REMAINS OPEN TO ASSIST BY PHONE OR EMAIL

www.ronnaraeleonard.ca



It is a privilege to live and work on the traditional lands of the K'omoks First Nations.

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