

Being COVID safe – Arts Funding – Decreased Hydro Rates – International AIDS Day - Small Farm business accelerator Pilot project

(A few words from Ronna-Rae regarding the election)

As the number of COVID-19 cases here on the Island have increased, we have been asked to reaffirm our commitment to re-flatten the curve. The summer months have given us plenty of practice the things that we know work and now is the time for us to:

1. If you feel sick – STAY HOME
2. Limit your social gatherings to your households
3. Wear a mask in all public indoor spaces
4. Limiting travel to essential reasons only is very important right now (ie. Medical appointments)
5. Wash your hands often
6. Trips to the grocery store etc. should be kept short
7. Trust in the process of our contact tracers

As a member of society we ask that you do your part. And as your members of the legislative assembly we continue to do our part to make sure that no one is left behind.

FUNDING TO SUPPORT ARTS AND CULTURE

This week Melanie Mark, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport announced that artists and organizations are getting more to help them through the pandemic, with increased funding and extended deadlines to apply for arts and culture recovery supports. This access to funding will ensure to keep arts and culture organizations stay afloat, while keeping BC-ers safe until we can resume full arts programs again. \$21 million for arts and culture through the BC Arts Council has been allocated from the BC Economic Recovery Plan. Find more details here:

<https://www.bcartscouncil.ca/program/expanded-arts-culture-resilience-supplement/> We are also helping organizations adapt to new delivery models through the Pivot Program. Click here to apply: <https://www.bcartscouncil.ca/program/project-assistance-pivot-program/>

KUS KUS SUM

Restoring the estuary is a crucial project for the community and the region. The abandoned sawmill site at the edge of the Comox estuary will be restored to its natural state following \$650,000 in additional bridge funding from the B.C. government. This comes after the announcement was made a few weeks ago. So for this accomplishment, I want to express my gratitude to the K'ómoks First Nation peoples, to the City of Courtenay and to Project Watershed for their work in making this happen. I'm proud our government saw the value in restoring Kus-kus-sum! See the full news release here:

https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020FLNRO0063-001970?fbclid=IwAR2fMu7sVvk4UAz2DLvD4EwPZ3XapJ-H0PG_OriVpD4mSp5eRVOzTNIHsYoY

BC HYDRO RATE CUTS

Customers of BC Hydro are also going to receive a welcome decrease in rate of 0.6%. This will be retroactive to April 1st, so you will see the credit on your bill early 2021. Click [here](#) to learn more.

SMALL FARM ACCELERATOR PILOT PROJECT

Do you have a small farm? The Small Farm Business Acceleration Pilot Program might be an opportunity for you. This program will aim to provide funding up to \$800,000 for business plan coaching for small and new farmers, as well as cost-shared funding for commercial farm infrastructure and equipment, to increase productivity and sales. Applications will be accepted from Dec 7th to Dec 15th. Learn more here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/small-business-acceleration-pilot-program>

WORLD AIDS DAY

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge that on December 1st we observed World AIDS Day. Amidst our current global pandemic it is important to remember both that AIDS. B.C. has surpassed a UNAIDS target and has seen a greater than 90% decrease in people living with and dying from AIDS. New HIV diagnoses have reached the lowest level, down by approximately 80% from the peak in 1987, when over 900 cases yearly were diagnosed in B.C.