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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

#2020-08

~~March 26, 2020~~ Updated April 21, 2020

COVID 19 UPDATE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SMITHERS – There have been many questions with regards to how the COVID-19 is affecting the Town of Smithers Operations. We have compiled a list of the “Frequently Asked Questions”.

SOCIAL DISTANCING CONCERNS

If you see a large gathering of people and they are not practicing physical distancing, who should this be reported to?

The Public is advised to report any complaints of social distancing and self-isolation to the Ministry of Health at 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319).

BC BUSINESS COVID-19 SUPPORT SERVICE

To help B.C. businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the B.C. government, through the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness and the Government of Canada, through Western Economic Diversification Canada, have partnered with Small Business BC (SBBC) to launch a new B.C. Business COVID-19 Support Service <https://covid.smallbusinessbc.ca>

PROVINCE-WIDE OPEN BURNING PROHIBITION

On April 16, 2020, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development, BC Wildfire Service has prohibited the use of Category 2 and Category 3 Open Fires, as well as Resource Management Open Fires (Prescribed Fires) across the province, including the entire Northwest Fire Centre. More information can be found on the Town’s website.

Who do I call to report an incident of someone burning in the Town of Smithers Boundary during the Open Fire Prohibition?

Please contact the Bylaw Enforcement Officer 250.877.9273, Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm. Fires observed afterhours within Town boundaries, please report to the Bylaw Officer for follow-up. Any fires within the Regional District, please contact the RAPP line 1-877-952-7277.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, some scheduled meetings may be cancelled or postponed. We regret any inconvenience this causes.

What meetings have been cancelled or postponed?

Council is now able to conduct meetings completely electronically during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SMITHERS REGIONAL AIRPORT

On March 12, 2020, the Smithers Regional Airport Administrative Office was temporarily closed to the public. Staff will be reporting to work as usual, but the general public will not be permitted to access the office. All other channels of communication will still be open to the public, including phone, email, and fax.

The Smithers Regional Airport Terminal Building remains open to the travelling public.

With the suspension of Air Canada flights into Smithers until the end of May, will the Smithers Regional Airport be closed?

The Smithers Regional Airport will remain open to Charter flights and Medevac flights.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

On March 12, 2020, measures were taken by installing a plexi-glass barrier to prevent the spread of the virus at the Reception counter in the Municipal Hall. All staff will be reporting to work as usual, but the general public will not be permitted in the employee only areas of the office. The public must practise 2-metre social distancing in the lobby, as indicated with the tape on the floor.

Will there be an extension for property tax deadlines?

Please be aware that any decisions to postpone deadlines will come from the Province to us, so we will keep you updated as we learn more.

Will there be an extension for utility payment deadlines?

Not at this time.

WORKS AND OPERATIONS

On March 12, 2020, the Smithers Works and Operations Office was temporarily closed to the public. All staff will be reporting to work as usual, the Works and Operations Clerk will be available to answer the telephone between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

What if I have a request for service?

If you have a request for service, please contact the Works and Operations Clerk at 250-847-1649, Monday to Friday, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Is my garbage collection affected by the Works Yard Office closures?

Weekly garbage collection continues to operate. Please ensure that all garbage is disposed of properly, by tightly securing the bag prior to placing it in the garbage cart. Ensure that the cart lid closes and garbage is not overflowing.

Can disinfecting wipes or wet wipes (moist towelette or baby wipes) be flushed down the toilet?

NO, these items are not permitted to be flushed. Unlike toilet paper that usually breaks apart in about 24 hours or so, wet wipes will remain virtually imperishable even when flushed down the bowl. Most wet wipes contain plastic fibre, which makes them partially non-biodegradable. Many plumbing experts would attest to the fact that wet wipes have been found intact within drain pipes even after months of being flushed. To help keep the Smithers Sewer Treatment Plant running as efficiently as possible, please dispose of your used wipes in the garbage.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

What do I do if I need a building inspection?

The Town will still continue to do inspections on existing new construction. Inspections are to be booked in advance by calling 250-847-1600. Inspections will be performed with the Site Supervisor only.

Existing permits for building additions or renovations involving an occupied dwelling will be inspected "virtually" with the owner/contractor asked to take and email photos to the Building Inspector.

What do I do if I want a new building permit?

As of March 17, 2020, until further notice, the Town will only be accepting building permit applications for new construction and commercial projects.

What do I do if I want to add an addition to a building or a renovation?

As of March 17, 2020, until further notice, the Town is asking that homeowners at this time to hold off on building renovations and/or additions.

I require cemetery services. Am I able to visit the office in person?

Cemetery services can be scheduled by appointment, please call 250-847-1600.

Please follow the recommended protocols and do not come into the Town Hall Office if you are sick, if you have been around sick people, or have possibly been exposed to COVID-19. Thank you for your co-operation and understanding.

RECREATION

Getting outside is still important for our physical and mental wellbeing. We encourage you to get outside if you are able to, but while doing so, it is **very** important to stay two metres away from anyone who does not live with you.

Can I use the Town parks, playgrounds, and tennis courts?

As of March 23, 2020, ALL Town owned parks (including the Skate Park), playgrounds and tennis courts are closed to the public. Signs will be posted at these facilities.

Can I use the Perimeter Trail that pass through parks?

A trail passing through a park is not closed, the public are permitted to walk on the trail through a park, but not permitted to loiter and/or play in the park. If you choose to use the trail system, please ensure social distancing can be maintained.

Can I use the Smithers Public Library?

As of March 16, 2020, the Smithers Public Library is closed until further notice.

Can I use the Bulkley Valley Regional Pool and Recreation Centre?

As of March 16, 2020, the Bulkley Valley Regional Pool and Recreation Centre is closed until further notice.

Can I use the Smithers Civic Centre or New Arena?

As of March 16, 2020, the Smithers Civic Centre and New Arena are closed for the 2019/2020 ice season.

Can I use the Smithers Fairgrounds?

As of March 23, 2020, the Smithers Fairgrounds is closed to the public. Signs will be posted at the entrance of Fairgrounds.

Can I still book a campsite at the Riverside Municipal Campground and RV Park?

The Riverside Municipal Campground and RV Park is currently closed. The 2020 season is scheduled to reopen on May 31, 2020. Reservations can be made online, with the understanding that the reservations may be cancelled if recommended by the health authorities.

For more information, please follow the Town of Smithers webpage [“2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Situation Summary”](#)

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