

For immediate release

March 18, 2020

SQUAMISH-LILLOOET REGIONAL DISTRICT (SLRD) ANNOUNCES CHANGES IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 SITUATION

Essential Services to Continue; Administration Office in Pemberton is Closed to the Public Until Further Notice

Pemberton, BC – The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) is closing its administration office in Pemberton and cancelling all public events effective today, following the regular Board meeting.

This is in response to the rapidly changing COVID-19 situation and the Prime Minister of Canada's direction that all Canadians should, as much as possible, stay home. Essential services will continue to be delivered.

The SLRD Administration Office at 1350 Aster Street in Pemberton, BC will be open today, to allow for the March 18, 2020 Board meeting to proceed in order to address urgent business such as adopting the 2020 Financial Plan. The office will close immediately following the Board meeting, and until further notice, with phone and online services continuing at this time

“We know that this development will have an impact on our communities, however we feel this action is prudent given the situation around COVID-19 and the direction from the Prime Minister and Provincial health authorities that people, if at all possible, stay home at this time,” said SLRD Board Chair, Tony Rainbow.

“The health and wellbeing of our staff members and the residents in our communities remains a top priority for all of us at the SLRD,” he said.

The SLRD continues to follow the most current advice and direction from British Columbia's Ministry of Health in order to protect individuals and reduce transmission.

The SLRD is taking a phased approach to provide staff with access to be able to work remotely. Some staff are already working remotely by the end of the week, it is expected that all SLRD staff who are able will have transitioned to work remotely and these arrangements will remain in place until further notice.

Remote work is a strategy to immediately reduce the risk of person to person transmission of COVID-19 by reducing the number of people present in the office, while ensuring that essential services continue.

The SLRD activated its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to coordinate the flow of information, facilitate business continuity and governance planning and pandemic emergency response advance planning.

The SLRD's EOC team, including the Interim Chief Administration Officer, continues to meet (via email and telephone) regularly with counterparts throughout the region to ensure a coordinated approach to this evolving situation throughout the region.

The SLRD is committed to ensuring that services to the community remain in place, while taking the necessary measures to protect the health and safety of its employees.

At this time, the Planning Department and the Building Department will continue to process applications and permits. All documents, however, must be sent to the SLRD office by one of the following options only (courier is no longer an option):

- Mail: PO Box 219, Pemberton BC V0N 2L0
- Fax: 604-894-6526
- Email: planning@slrd.bc.ca

The status of building inspections is currently being determined and more information will be provided as soon as possible.

The SLRD can be reached by calling 604-894-6371, or toll-free 1-800-298-7753. A staff directory including telephone numbers and emails is also available on the SLRD website: www.slrd.bc.ca/staffdirectory

While there may be delay in reaching staff, employees will be monitoring voicemail and email and will respond as they are able to do so.

“We understand that the situation regarding COVID-19 is creating concern among our residents and we share those concerns,” said Rainbow. “This is a challenging time for all of us. As neighbours, friends and family, we must now, more than ever, look out for each other and continue to follow the important, expert advice of the health officials in our province to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.”

In the SLRD, the lead agencies on public health decisions are Interior Health (for Electoral Area A, Electoral Area B, and the District of Lillooet) and Vancouver Coastal Health (for Electoral Area C, Electoral Area D, Village of Pemberton, Resort Municipality of Whistler and District of Squamish.

“This is an unprecedented situation,” said Rainbow. “I encourage all of us to remain calm, to seek information from official sources, to follow the advice of our medical health experts, to exercise caution but also to remember to be kind to one another.”

Residents can seek updates from official sources, including:

BC Centre for Disease Control:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

Vancouver Coastal Health:

<http://www.vch.ca/about-us/news/vancouver-coastal-health-statement-on-coronavirus>

Interior Health:

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca>

The SLRD will continue to share updated information and links to resources on its website: www.slrdbc.ca

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About the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

Located in southwestern BC, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) is a local government federation consisting of four member municipalities (the District of Lillooet, the District of Squamish, the Village of Pemberton and the Resort Municipality of Whistler) and four unincorporated, rural electoral areas (A, B, C, and D). Headquartered in Pemberton, which is the approximate geographic centre of the region, the SLRD delivers a wide range of local, regional and sub-regional services to approximately 42,665 residents (2016 Census).

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