

Introduction

Thank you to all who attended the April 28, 2020 Virtual Town Hall for residents of UBC, the University Neighbourhoods Association (UNA), and the University Endowment Lands. I organized this community event to provide an opportunity for residents to come together to discuss concerns, suggestions and solutions during the COVID19 crisis. It was an honour to be joined by a number of local dignitaries who provided updates and listened to the concerns of residents. These dignitaries included:

- Hon. Joyce Murray, Federal Member of Parliament for Vancouver Quadra and Minister of Digital Government
- Hon. David Eby, Provincial Member of the Legislative Assembly for Vancouver-Point Grey and Attorney General
- Dr. Santa Ono, UBC President and Vice-Chancellor
- Dr. Patricia Daly, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority's Chief Medical Officer
- RCMP Staff Sergeant Chuck Lan
- UNA Board Chair Richard Watson
- UEL Community Advisory Committee Chair Claire Huxtable

The following were questions that were not answered during the meeting or were sent to me after the meeting. I've compiled follow up responses from our community leaders, as well as some additional resources. If you would like more information or have unanswered questions, please contact

- Jen McCutcheon at areaajen@gmail.com
- David Eby at David.eby.mla@leg.bc.ca
- UNA Board Chair: Richard.watson@myuna.ca
- UEL CAC: council@uelcommunity.com

I will host another virtual Town Hall in the coming months. If you are not already on my mailing list, please email me at areaajen@gmail.com to receive updates.

Questions and Answers Arising from UBC/UNA/UEL Town Hall on Tuesday April 28, 2020

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Questions for Dr. Daly (VCH Chief Medical Officer)

1. Please can you provide more clarification on children and what they should or should not be doing (in a family context, not a daycare context). If children are carriers of COVID19, isn't it risky to have them playing together (risky for adults)?

- In BC, thousands of children have been tested for COVID-19 but less than 1% have tested positive, and only a very small number of COVID-19 cases identified to date are children. This is consistent with the experience of other provinces and countries and the data coming out in studies, which indicates that children are much less likely to be infected with COVID-19 than adults. This research has also found that children are less likely to transmit the virus than adults, without any proof to date of transmission of the virus from children to adults. We're not sure why children are less likely to get or transmit COVID-19, but it's an observation we've been making around the world.
- Like anyone else in the family, children should be reminded about good hygiene and proper handwashing, especially before and after playing outdoors and during meals, taught how to sneeze and cough into a tissue or elbow. As long as they're following those steps, the risk to them and others they are in contact with, is low.
- Here is more information from the BC CDC: <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/Caring-for-children.pdf>

2. How important is physical distancing?

- Proper handwashing, staying home when you're sick and good hygiene is the most effective way for people to protect themselves from COVID-19 and prevent spread. Social distancing is a population-measure public health recommendation to reduce the number of potential contacts people have in the community so we can flatten the curve and reduce community spread. But if you briefly pass someone in public within two metres and they have not coughed or sneezed on you, there is no evidence that interaction poses any risk of infection. The virus is mostly spread indoors through close, prolonged contacts and face-to-face interactions. And relying on social distancing alone doesn't eliminate risk of infection which can occur by touching a surface that has been exposed to someone's droplets, which is why handwashing and not touching your face is so important.

3. I've heard mixed information about wearing masks. Should we be wearing them?

- There is very little evidence that wearing a mask in public protects people from infection. In fact, the rationale for wearing masks in public is the opposite, to prevent exposing others if you happen to be infected yourself. If you're wearing a mask or face covering, it may prevent the spreading of your droplets if you happen to cough or sneeze, so it is more for other people's protection if you happen to be sick. For that reason, Canadian public health leaders have been permissive of people using non-medical masks in public, though they have not recommending people do so. But if you are sick, you should be staying at home so you're not putting other people at risk in the first place. And people who choose to wear masks in public could increase their risk if they are constantly touching and adjusting the mask with their hands, which may have come in contact with the virus, and touching their face more. Those who choose to wear non-medical masks in public should remove them carefully, wash their hands thoroughly afterwards, and wash masks between use.
- Here is a link to guidance from BC CDC on the use of masks here in BC: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks>

Questions for Minister Eby (MLA)

1. What resources are available for children, students, and families during the pandemic

- Resources for kids to deal with the COVID19 crisis can be found in Minister Eby's most recent newsletter: <https://bit.ly/3f9VqLf>
- Free virtual social and emotional learning plans are available through the WE Schools @home program: <https://www.we.org/en-CA/our-work/we-schools/at-home/>. Accessible for grades K-12 in both English and French, these resources place a special emphasis on social-emotional learning and resiliency. The program was developed in collaboration with B.C. educators, the Ministry of Education and University of British Columbia and mental health professionals.
- Also available to parents and caregivers is the new EASE (Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators) at Home program <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/child-teen-mental-health/ease>. Activities focus on tips and strategies parents can use with their children to create calming routines, help them talk about difficult emotions and manage their anxiety. Kits have been developed for grades K-3 and 4-7 and provide five weeks of activities, with a different game or story for each day. Activities are research-based and proven to help younger children calm themselves, learn relaxation techniques and understand their worries. The WE Well-being and EASE at Home materials complement the recent Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions announcement of \$5 million to expand existing mental-health programs and launch new services to support British Columbians around COVID-19
- One focus of the funding is a new virtual clinic that will make Foundry services available around the province for young people aged 12 to 24 years and their families through voice, video and chat, rolling out April 20th: <https://foundrybc.ca/>
- Here2Talk for BC Post-Secondary enrolled students from any BC institution: Here2Talk connects students with mental health support when they need it. Through this program, all students currently registered in a B.C. post-secondary institution have access to free, confidential counselling and community referral services, conveniently available 24/7 via app, phone and web: <https://here2talk.ca/home>
- Kid's Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 to speak to a professional counselor, 24 hours a day.
- West Side Family Place offers a number of ways to connect and to get support. Find out more here: <http://www.westsidefamilyplace.com/virtual-programs-from-west-side-family-place/>
- Finally, the UNA Youth Leadership Program has established a Youth connection Instagram site: Project Y4Y.

2. Are there resources for UBC students who are struggling to pay rent?

- Unfortunately, the rental support that the BC government has put in place do not apply to university students living in student housing (student housing is excluded from this legislation). For those living in places other than student housing, there is a provincial subsidy for renters with wage loss, they would apply here: <https://www.bchousing.org/news?newsId=1479155088004>.
- Recently, the Federal government offered a student subsidy, which is available for foreign and domestic students. More information can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>
- Work is also being done with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Advanced Education to see if there is anything that can be done retroactively. UBC is also looking into additional solutions.

Questions for UBC

- 1. I have noticed that fields are still being used, despite being closed. How are they being reminded about physical distancing, since they are not practicing this themselves.**
 - UBC and the UNA are working to re-open some closed outdoor spaces while complying with Provincial Health Officer orders. To support this, signage will be installed with information on physical distancing requirements and is expected to be in place next week. A similar approach has been adopted by many municipalities across the region, with the expectation that most people are complying with Provincial Health Orders and doing their part to help flatten the curve.

- 2. Can the fields be re-opened? They seem like an ideal place to be practicing social distancing**
 - See above.

- 3. Given the information provided by Dr. Daly, I am wondering if the UBC playgrounds, such as those in Acadia Park are now open?**
 - Our current approach is to keep the play areas closed for the time being, particularly until the City of Vancouver clarifies their approach so that residents from outside of UBC aren't flooding our play areas.

- 4. Please clarify why so many small businesses have closed. If that was not because of a health order, was it a municipal order requiring businesses to close if they are unable to maintain 2m distances for their customers?**
 - Commercial tenants have autonomy to make decisions regarding reduced hours or closures based on their individual business needs and circumstances, while abiding by government and health authority recommendations and directives. UBC Properties Trust has been working closely with businesses to understand their needs, including access to rent support and deferral options.

- 5. Are there ways that residents can support the UBC Student Food Bank?**
 - Food security is an important issue for UBC and the AMS Food Bank plays a key part in this. The Food Bank is currently seeking donations through an online payment portal and/or through donations of non-perishable items. There is more information about the food bank and how to donate here: <https://www.ams.ubc.ca/student-services/food-bank/>

- 6. Could some kind of collaboration be set up between UBC Farm and the UNA?**
 - This is something we would be happy to further explore with our colleagues at the UBC Farm, together with the UNA. I've asked my team to look into this and will connect back with you on opportunities.

Questions for UNA

- 1. I have noticed that fields are still being used, despite being closed. How are they being reminded about physical distancing, since they are not practicing this themselves**
 - Fields remained closed. The UNA has no way of enforcing the physical distancing suggestions, however we will have a few staff that will begin walking around some of our high traffic areas promoting safe physical and social distancing.

- 2. Can the fields be re-opened? They seem like an ideal place to be practicing physical distancing?**
 - There is an announcement forthcoming from the UNA for their parks and fields. We expected some fields to be available sometime next week.

- 3. Could the UNA provide a list of local stores that are open for delivery or pick up**
 - The majority of local stores and businesses are not linked with the UNA so we cannot provide such a list. The only local business we have information about is the Bean Around the World in the Old Barn Community Centre - It is open daily between 9 am and 3 pm for take-out only. UBC Properties Trust (UBCPT) may be of assistance for information about the businesses in Westbrook - Email - info@ubcproperties.com or by phone at 604-731-3103.

- 4. I am concerned about the mosquito-breeding stations (fountains) in Westbrook Village. More often than not they are not functioning and are partly filled with swampy water. Can they be repaired or drained completely?**
 - UNA operations will monitor the situation and do necessary work to address the issue.

- 7. Could some kind of collaboration be set up between UBC Farm and the UNA?**
 - Not sure what the specific request is. The UNA does have lots of contacts with UBC Farm. However, the question needs to be further understood. If it is about making food available, sharing or donating it for use in the local student Food Bank the UNA is willing to work with UBC to help out. Capacity will need to be taken into consideration.

Thank you and stay tuned for information about a second Town Hall – likely in late May!