

Subject: Metro Vancouver Update – September 18th

Dear Staff:

I hope you are all doing well. It's September! And over halfway through, but who's counting. There's something about September that always feels to me like the new year, part 2. And not just because I'm married to a teacher librarian. Something in the air feels like we're gearing up for another start, and I'm sure a lot of you sense it too – we're in for a busy, hectic time, and I hope you are all continuing to take care of yourselves as much as possible.

On my end, I'm continuing my health kick, as per my last email. Clearly we are in a time of public health concerns, and I've determined it's important that we're all as healthy as can be, to help protect ourselves and each other. My bike is getting lots of wear, (right up until the smoke rolled in) and I'm focused; I've even put the macadamia nut cookies away, which is no easy feat. The problem is, I have absolutely zero willpower when something is in front of me. So I'm taking the whole of the senior executive team down with me – salads for everyone! If your GM looks hungry, now you know why!

On another note, do you remember how I was sharing music and song recommendations and asking you all to do the same/send me some suggestions? Well, I'm sorry to say that you all failed miserably. Or I have a very strong firewall on my email account. So I'm trying again. Here's something that struck me and stayed with me this week: 3,000 people of different backgrounds and faiths came together to learn a new song, in under an hour. Here is the result: One Day – Koolulam Project - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjPpMXMjlj0>. As always, I welcome your song suggestions! And recipes. My salad game needs some lifting...

COVID-19- An Update

I know it's an exceptionally busy time again, after what was an already full-on first half of 2020. Please take care of yourselves and know that resiliency isn't only a unifying framework that we're adopting for planning at Metro Vancouver, (see my July email or the Board [report here](#) for more info on this) but something that we all need to live and support, including our own resiliency.

It's not lost on me that cases are going up, and many of our staff's children are now back to school. 2020 has been really difficult and wearying, for so many.

It's also clear that we are going to have to learn to live with COVID-19 for a long time. Again, it's so important that we all stay vigilant, and do not let our guards down; **we all have a shared responsibility when it comes to COVID-19**. We need to treat every interaction, every surface, every door handle, as if it may have come into contact with this virus. We all play a critical part in preventing any spread and continuing to ensure our services are always available for the region that is counting on us.

Within our workspaces, there shouldn't be any sharing of food occurring. Staff should be disinfecting communal spaces such as kitchens and meeting rooms before and after use, and it's critical that all our protocols are followed. It's also critical that time is coded correctly; please refer to Payroll's emails on coding. This time coding helps us, as an organization, to assess the impact of the pandemic on our staff and operations. When our HR and Corporate Safety staff are contact tracing, they should not be able to find any close contacts, if everyone is adhering to physical distancing guidelines and our safety protocols. These protocols and practices have been adapted for both field and office, and it is important that they are followed at all times.

I know you all will have seen the increased use of masks within our region and surrounding communities. In the next few weeks, we will be distributing masks to all of our employees. The wearing of these masks won't be mandatory, as long as 2m physical distancing is maintained, but is encouraged in communal areas, and welcomed in others. We are encouraging everyone to do their part. A mask protocol will be issued from Corporate Safety shortly, which will have additional information.

I also want to note that I am confident in our practices and our health and safety measures. The lack of spread within our work spaces to date is confirming that our practices are sound. The primary focus has been and will continue to be, keeping our staff safe and healthy, and ensuring the continuity of our essential services. While I am reassured, I also understand that there are employees that are feeling concern about what is next. We've also had questions about the continued requirement to attend to the physical work site at least 1 day a week, (for employees that can work remotely) and about follow-ups from HR and Corporate Safety. Please know that this direction, on requirements on reporting to site as well as all COVID-19 related actions, comes from me and the senior executive team; I am grateful for the efforts of everyone that is supporting our COVID-19 response. As a precautionary measure, we are currently reviewing our site-presence requirements, in anticipation of the Fall and Winter ahead. Should anything change around these requirements, we will advise in short order.

I am buoyed by the response of so many of you, and how you have stepped up and supported during this time. I know it hasn't been easy, and this has been the most unusual and trying of circumstances. In this Fall and Winter ahead, what we do will be important, but *how* we do it will matter even more. Let's treat each other with grace and kindness. We may not always get it right, but we will try and do our best, and if we fail, let's pick ourselves up, and try again.

Diversity and Inclusion – Next Steps

Through later this month and beyond, our HR team will be launching Diversity and Inclusion training, with a focus on Unconscious Bias. I strongly encourage you all to take this training. They'll also be continuing our 'Respect Matters 2.0: Empowering the Bystander' training. On October 1st, [Senator Murray Sinclair](#), who was Manitoba's first Indigenous judge and Canada's second, will be welcomed at Metro for a special virtual webinar. Senator Sinclair was the Chief Commissioner of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada and is a very insightful and powerful speaker. More information on this is coming shortly. Our D&I Strategy, which welcomes and requires participation from staff, will also be rolled out in the coming weeks and months. We're also working towards sending out a Diversity and Inclusion Survey to the organization; our intent with this is to establish a baseline about where Metro Vancouver is at in regards to several key factors.

I've been asked a little about why Diversity and Inclusion is a priority to me/our organization. I feel that 2020 has cracked so much of our world right open – our hearts, our belief systems, our understanding. A huge part of me genuinely trusts and believes that we will eventually look back on this year as a turning point. When health was challenged, on a global scale, people started to stop. And take notice. And realize physical health was one piece of the puzzle. And the other pieces – environmental health, financial and economic health, social health, racial justice, equality – all these other pieces also weren't 'healthy'. And suddenly, by stopping, it gave us all space to pause, think and recognize, and this has turned into the catalyst for action.

I don't know if we ever fully recognize a movement or a shift when we're in it. But I do believe we will always look back on 2020. The year that defined for us who we are. It's not without trials, but our

choices during this time, our decisions, our actions, what side we fall on – all of this will form part of what becomes our legacy. But to do the right thing, to help correct a system at the local level as well as the global level, we need to start right here at Metro Vancouver. I also believe that regardless to the degree that our world around us improves, we can use this time to make things better here at Metro Vancouver. We can hope for the world, and lead from right here

In Closing

I know it may still be a while, but I look forward to the day that I can celebrate with all of you in person, and thank you, in person and without a screen, for your work and commitment during this time.

As we enter 'New Year, part two', please take care of yourselves, your families, and each other.

Together we make our region strong.

Be well,
Jerry

Jerry W. Dobrovolsky, P.Eng., MBA
Commissioner/Chief Administrative Officer

