

COVID-19 Message from ISC - BC Region March 26, 2020 - Update#9

Good afternoon,

We understand that the sudden emergence of this situation may have affected planned spending of funds that were allocated for February and March. As shared in a letter from Indigenous Services Canada to First Nations across Canada March 25, we wish to assure you that ISC is taking action to ensure that funding for planned activities that do not occur by March 31st, due to the unforeseen crisis, can be carried forward to next fiscal year. Situations will be analyzed on a case-by-case basis, in full recognition of the extraordinary circumstances we now find ourselves in.

Equally, we do not want you to be concerned about the Department clawing back funding on existing programs and services in 2020/21 based on delays in undertaking activities due to the COVID-19 emergency. We understand that some of you have asked if you should be laying off staff who currently are unable to move forward on program implementation; we wish to clarify that you are not expected to take these measures.

In addition, we are working to provide clarity on community distribution formula for the Government of Canada's \$305 million [Indigenous Community Support Fund](#). The First Nations portion is \$215 million; each First Nation will get a base amount adjusted for population, remoteness and community well-being. An additional \$15 million, will go to supporting regional, urban and Indigenous organizations supporting those who live away from their communities. We anticipate to be able to share more information in the coming days, and appreciate the urgency.

These allocations of the \$305 million are only part of what is available to all Canadians on and off reserve as there are other supports to individuals such as Income Assistance, and the [Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#) a taxable benefit announced today that would provide \$2,000 a month for up to four months for workers who lose their income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information see: [COVID-19: First Nations Community Guide on Accessing Additional Supports](#)

For federal COVID benefits - e.g. for people who have lost their job due to COVID-19 or are isolating here is the link to apply <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>

Partner Info

The Province of BC has taken unprecedented steps to support COVID-19 response. Today the Honorable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General announced that the Province is using extraordinary powers under a provincial state of emergency to help keep British Columbians safe. New measures include taking control of the supply chain, banning the secondary resale of goods like food and medical supplies and enabling enforcement of the provincial health officers orders to restrict gatherings and business closures. The Minister recognized that many local governments, First Nations and partners

have stepped up to make sure they have prepared to protect their communities from the impacts of COVID-19. In an advance call between Emergency Management BC and First Nations Leadership the Province clarified that:

- the Province recognizes the jurisdiction of First Nations as outlined in federal legislation, and that these provincial orders do not override that jurisdiction; and
- the Province supports the expressed views of First Nations communities to minimize the risk of entry of COVID-19 into their communities, and is prepared to consider additional steps to support their measures to control entry.

For more information about the provincial announcement please see:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PSSG0020-000568>

Income Assistance

We'd also like to share Information sent to us from the Province for off-reserve Income Assistance clients. You can access income assistance services a few ways:

- Online with [My Self Serve](#)
- Toll-free with 1-866-866-0800*
- In-person at an office location

*Current clients who are on income or disability assistance can call the 1-866 number for emergency assistance.

People who are non-clients can apply for assistance. The best and fastest way to apply is online.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance/apply-for-assistance>

The Province has created 1-888-COVID-19 to connect British Columbians needing non-medical information about COVID-19. This includes the latest information on travel recommendations and social/physical distancing, as well as access to support and resources from the provincial and federal governments.

Question of the Day

Our First Nation has an election planned and we are considering postponing it. Do you have advice about what to do?

The decision to hold or to postpone an IA or FNEA election remains under the purview of First Nations. The direction from the Department in these difficult times is that current Chiefs and Councils can get a six month extension for Indian Act and First Nations Election Act elections. This means that First Nations will continue to assume leadership after the expiry of the current term.

First Nations choosing to postpone elections will be required to inform ISC regional offices through a BCR to ensure proper recording of information in the Band Governance Management System (BGMS). Accurate information will also ensure maintenance of stable communication and solid work relationships in the coming months.

A formal correspondence addressed to affected First Nations is currently in progress and will be issued to you shortly for direct transmission to said First Nations to ensure uniform delivery of this approach.

(Please note that First Nations holding elections under their own custom code in the coming months will also be included for their information in a separate correspondence)

Should your community be having an election in the near future, we invite you to contact us. Please e-mail aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca; or contact Carina Chow, Manager of Governance and Capacity Development at: 778-239-7124 or carina.chow@canada.ca.

National Information

- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Infographics](#)
- [The COVID-19 First Nations Community Guide on Accessing Additional Supports](#)
- The Hope for Wellness Help Line is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week to support members of your community experiencing emotional distress and may be reached directly by dialling **1-855-242-3310** or via online chat at: hopeforwellness.ca

Useful Links

First Nations Health Authority

[Summary Page of COVID-19 information and response](#)

COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool

[The app will let you receive the latest updates, trusted resources, and alerts. The Self-Assessment Tool is built in.](#)

First Nations Public Service Secretariat

[As Band offices close their doors in response to the COVID-19 threat, the FNPSS is providing a platform for Band administrators to access and review timely information.](#)

Public Health Agency of Canada

[Epidemiological summary of COVID-19 cases in Canada: includes map and other data](#)

Regional Contacts

We've set up a dedicated e-mail address if you have any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests, please e-mail: aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca The e-mail address and other information are also available on the FNPSS website.

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