



Regional Board Report

TO: Regional Board

FROM: Brian Reardon
Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 23, 2020

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Response Actions

Voting Entitlement: All Directors – Unweighted Corporate Vote – Simple Majority – LGA 208.1

Purpose: To provide the Regional Board with an update on operational actions underway to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the community.

Executive Summary:

The situation with COVID-19 virus continues to rapidly evolve in British Columbia. The Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) is carefully monitoring the situation and adapting as needed.

Areas for response have been focused on:

- Community and staff safety
- Provision of essential services
- Balanced use of financial resources and resident/business support
- Contribution to regional economic recovery

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Board receive for information the April 23, 2020 report from the Chief Administrative Officer regarding the Regional District of Central Okanagan's COVID-19 response actions.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Reardon".

Brian Reardon
Chief Administrative Officer

Prepared by: Jodie Foster, Director of Communications & Information Services

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan: Supporting Sustainable Communities and Economic Development and operating within the values in the Strategic Plan.

General: The COVID-19 Pandemic is an unprecedented situation

Organizational: The RDCO is responding to the needs of the community through its services.

Financial: Fiscal Responsibility continues in these uncertain times to deliver the RDCO's services.

Policy: N/A

Legal/Statutory Authority: As per legislation, Ministerial Orders and Guidelines

Background:

The situation with COVID-19 virus continues to rapidly evolve in British Columbia. The Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) is carefully monitoring the situation and adapting as needed.

Areas for response have been focused on:

- Community and staff safety
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Safety

The RDCO is closely following the direction of the public health experts from Interior Health, the BC Ministry of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada to protect staff and the residents who use RDCO services.

Actions:

- Activated the Emergency Operation Centre for a Level 1 response to coordinate advance planning and purchasing of some essential items like personal protective equipment for local government first responders
- Shifted service delivery from in-person to online and phone where ever possible. This includes the temporary closure of public facing facilities
- Incorporated physical distancing in regional parks including increasing spacing between parking stalls and installation of signage to keep parks open, meeting residents' need for exercise and outdoor space
 - Closed facilities such as playgrounds where requirement for physical distancing cannot be met
 - Portable washrooms added in parks higher traffic and vulnerable population

Essential services

The RDCO continues to provide essential services either directly or through contracts including the water utilities, waste water treatment plant and sewer collector systems, fire departments and solid waste management and external communications.

Actions:

- Secured required personal protective equipment and ensured adequate staffing for business continuity of RDCO services directly delivered
- Worked with key contractors to ensure business continuity for contracted services
- Ensured supply chain security for required materials for water and waste water services
- Secured essential services agreement with local governments across the regional for continuity of local authority services

Financial resources and resident / business support

The RDCO has taken a fiscally balanced approach to the 2020 budgeted expenditures by reducing spending in areas where work must be curtailed to meet health restrictions, and continuing with essential projects and those where meaningful work can still take place to keep local businesses working and staff employed. The RDCO is also helping support residents and businesses with the following actions:

Financial resource actions:

- Suspended all staff travel and training
- Suspended recruitment of new positions outside of those required for essential services
- Reduced recruitment of summer students
- Cancelled public facing programs and events like the Repair Café and Trunk Sale and park programming
- Continuing with capital projects for essential services such as upgrades to the Waste Water Treatment Plant (TWAS vault)

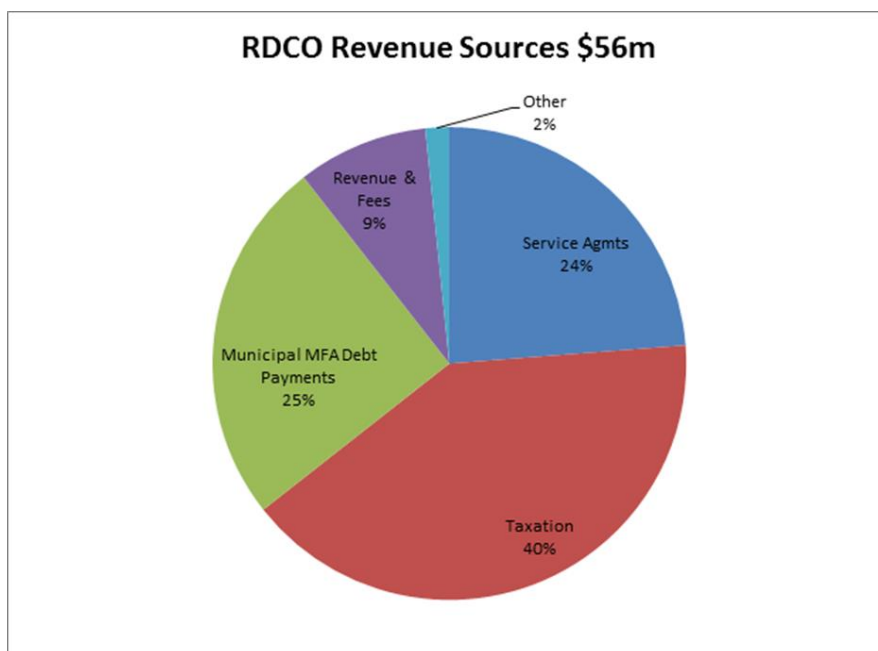
Support actions:

- Giving Regional Board consideration to suspending late payment penalties on utility bills
- Continuing to review and process development permits and issue building permits online and by appointment so development and construction can continue
- Keeping essential services like the water utilities, waste water collection, garbage and recycling services all running smoothly to support residents and businesses
- Providing information to residents regarding the Province's tax deferment programs for:
 - those over 55 years of age,
 - a surviving spouse of any age,
 - a person with disabilities or
 - families with children
 - Visit <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/property-taxes/annual-property-tax/defer-taxes>)

It is important to note that the RDCO operates differently as a regional district compared to a municipality. The RDCO does not tax property owners in the region directly and is legislatively required to submit the budget bylaw to the Province before the end of March.

The final budget bylaw was passed by the Regional Board on March 23, 2020. The RDCO's total budget for 2020 is \$56 million. Tax requisitions of \$22.7 million (40 per cent of the budget) have been submitted to the Province and Municipalities for collection, as required.

Any changes made to the 2020 budget now will not change the tax requisition for 2020 but may offset costs in 2021 through surplus funds. Municipal debt payments to the Municipal Finance Authority of BC (MFABC) totaling \$14.3 million (25 per cent of the budget) must be received and made via the RDCO on time.



Economic recovery

The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) is a function of the Regional District of Central Okanagan and is working to facilitate both immediate and long term business needs discussions in our community.

Short term actions:

Focus is on providing information resources for facilitation of public health and supporting businesses and the labour force through the immediate impacts of business shutdowns and/or severely reduced revenue.

- Serving as a conduit for local economic development/business support organizations to encourage a coordinated regional approach to response and recovery
- Creating and sharing plain language guides published by Federal and Provincial business supports.
- Hosting resources at [InvestKelowna.com/covid19](https://investkelowna.com/covid19)
- Acting as a concierge service and offering 1:1 support and guidance to business.
- Monitoring and advocating on behalf of local business needs to provincial and federal bodies without creating additional burden for businesses.
- Engaging the COEDC Advisory Council and Executive

Long term actions:

Over the next 4-18 months the COEDC will focus on assisting the region to emerge from this crisis stronger.

- Facilitate development of a strategy for the Regional Mayor's and WFN Chief's Economic Recovery Task Force to re-energize the Central Okanagan economy, retain the business base and support employers and workers in getting people back to work as soon as possible following the response phase.
- Position the region for anticipated stimulus program funding from senior levels of government