

City continues phased workforce reduction

(Penticton, BC – April 3, 2020) – The City of Penticton has taken steps to manage its financial situation during the current COVID-19 public health crisis through a phased reduction of its union, exempt and managerial workforce. Today, additional staff received temporary layoff notices, resulting in a current workforce reduction of approximately 20 per cent.

“This difficult announcement follows initial steps taken in mid March to adjust the City’s workforce in response to provincial health orders requiring local governments to protect their residents and staff from the spread of COVID-19 by closing all public facilities,” said Penticton City Manager, Donny van Dyk. “The impact of those orders was immediate and deep reaching to several city departments, particularly those providing daily services and programs at facilities now closed to the public. Additional measures, including extending options for voluntary temporary layoffs, were put forth one week later, followed by today’s announcement which introduces workforce reductions across every department.”

In addition to introducing temporary layoffs, the City of Penticton will lower spending in other areas by canceling or deferring projects, reducing certain non-essential service levels, limiting the use of consultants and reducing non-essential travel and training.

“It goes without saying, the last few weeks have been a very difficult time as we grappled with the rapid decrease in the services we’re able to offer residents and the corresponding drop in revenues from those services. By enacting these temporary measures now, it’s my hope we’ll emerge from this challenging period with the financial health that allows us to resume normal operations in a quick and efficient way,” said van Dyk.

The process and decisions that led to today’s announcement occurred only after considerable discussion and reflection by Council and senior management. A principled approach was used to determine how best to manage the city’s costs by considering both the direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis on city revenues and the 2020 budget.

“These are unprecedented circumstances, a time when we must think deeply about the roles and impacts of COVID-19 on our incredible City staff, review our approach to managing the business and operations of the City throughout this crisis, and remain acutely aware and responsive to the highly disruptive outcome COVID-19 is having on our residents, our businesses and our way of life,” said Penticton Mayor, John Vassilaki.

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