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NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

COVID-19 Update

As are you, I am extremely concerned by developments related to COVID-19 in Canada and around the world. Certainly the fact that several of the recent COVID-related deaths in Canada have taken place in our own community is cause for great sadness. Our hearts go out to the families.

We are clearly all worried about the well-being of our loved ones and our communities. COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving global challenge. Canadians have seen the spread of the virus internationally and the very difficult circumstances that have evolved in several countries.

Protecting the health and safety of Canadians is the Government of Canada's highest priority. Over these past weeks the federal government has taken important measures to address the spread of the virus. These have included measures related to international travel - including telling Canadians they should not travel internationally and a call for Canadians outside the country to return home. It has included guidance to Canadians to avoid non-essential domestic travel.

There is now a ban on the entry of foreign nationals from all countries. With particular regard to the Canada-US border, all non-essential travel has been banned. However, essential travel – such as the movement of food and medicines – will continue. Both Governments recognize it is critical that we preserve key supply chains.

The actions taken by the federal government have been guided by the advice of health professionals. Canada's Chief Health Officer, Dr. Tam, and her team have been working with local and international partners to minimize the impacts of COVID-19 on the health of Canadians and our economy.

To date the measures taken have kept infection numbers in our country to a relatively low level. Health officials do however expect these numbers will continue to rise - at least in the short term. We all must take precautions to enable Canada to come through this crisis more effectively than have several other jurisdictions.

Sensible precautions

Sensible precautions to avoid transmission – such as 20-second handwashing with soap and hot water and social distancing - are the best ways to slow transmission.

I urge everyone to take precautions to protect themselves and their loved ones. Canada is at a critical time – a time

at which slowing the infection rate is essential to allow our health care system to effectively manage increased demands.

Individuals who are ill with the virus, particularly the elderly or persons with compromised immune systems, are most at risk. We all have a responsibility to work to ensure that assistance is available as demand increases.

Please avoid unnecessary visits to emergency departments. Testing for persons experiencing respiratory distress must take priority. Others who are concerned they may be experiencing symptoms should call **811** (HealthLinkBC) for testing and other information. Folks can find information on the virus and prevention at www.canada.ca/coronavirus and <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>.

Government support

Last week the federal government waived the EI waiting period for sick benefits for persons in isolation and introduced other measures to support working people. It also announced a commitment of \$1 billion to provide support to provincial and territorial health care systems and to support research.

This week we announced the first phase of Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan - to provide immediate help to those Canadians most in need. These measures represent over \$27 billion in direct support to Canadian workers and businesses. The government also announced that we would keep an additional \$55 billion in the economy by allowing people and businesses to defer payment of taxes to the end of August.

For more information on these measures please see <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>.

An abundance of caution

Behaving with caution is highly recommended. Stay out of large groups and keep a safe distance from others. Shop when you need to for the things you require. Let us however also be good neighbors - there is no place in our community for the hoarding of goods that all require.

To all North Vancouverites I say, stay safe. While the current circumstances are indeed extremely concerning, if we all act responsibly, we will get through this together.

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