

Community Caring

Responding to COVID-19

Health and safety of our community is the main priority during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has demonstrated how supportive and caring the residents of the South Peace are with many associations helping vulnerable populations in and around Dawson Creek. Organizations are providing support with grocery shopping, shoveling driveways, prepared meals, check-ins with seniors, and more.

The Dawson Creek Society for Community Living, PRRD, and Dawson Creek CO-OP created the Rural and Urban Senior's Initiative to offer information and services to help seniors access groceries and meals. Dawson Creek Alliance Church is in its 7th year of making homemade meals for seniors and those who are not able to cook for themselves.

The Better At Home program is continuing to offer essential support to local seniors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff and volunteers continue to offer drop off grocery service, they provided snow removal when requested and continue to provide friendly phone calls/check-ins. The Salvation Army has their doors open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10:30am - 1:30pm providing groceries to people in need. The On Your Own program recently provided 39 people's homes with food hampers.

Three days a week, the staff at On Your Own provide soup or casseroles to homes of individuals referred by Dawson

Creek Adult Mental Health and Addictions. The Nawican Friendship Centre, provides free bagged lunches six days a week to anyone in need of assistance. As of March 31st, the Nawican Friendship Centre has served over 800 meals to the community and has delivered to 130 residences in isolation around Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe.

City of Dawson Creek Community Services Staff will continue to give updates about initiatives and provide information to those asking about different services within and around Dawson Creek.

Mental health and physical well-being are also important during a time of isolation. The Community Services Team is hard at work putting together some creative ideas and programs you can do at home to keep busy, active and motivated during this time of physical distancing. Activities include Workout Wednesdays, as well as crafts and science experiments.

Visit the City of Dawson Creek Recreation Facebook page for at-home activities and updates related to recreation facilities.

As a reminder, all parks, green spaces and trails will remain open; however, social distancing measures must be practiced as per Provincial Health Orders. All playground equipment and outdoor fitness facilities are closed until further notice.

Options For Financial Relief To Residents And Businesses

Dawson Creek Council responds at April 27 meeting

Council recognizes the financial burden that the current COVID-19 Pandemic has placed on its residents and businesses. Council approved the following reductions in their efforts to assist the community during these difficult times.

Class 1 - Residential, Class 2 Utilities, and Class 9 Farm

The tax payment due date remains July 2nd; however, penalties for late tax payments have been adjusted to defer the standard 10% penalty issued for taxes unpaid as of July 2nd, as follows:

- 2% penalty for taxes unpaid as of August 1, 2020;
- 2% penalty for taxes unpaid as of September 1, 2020;
- 2% penalty for taxes unpaid as of October 1, 2020;
- 2% penalty for taxes unpaid as of November 1, 2020; and
- 2% penalty for taxes unpaid by December 1, 2020.

Class 4 Business, Class 5 Light Industry, Class 6 Business and Class 8 Recreation:

On April 16th, the Province directed that the tax payment due date is still July 2nd, however, the 10% penalty will not apply until October 1,

2020. Council has further adjusted the penalties for late tax payments as follows:

- 6% penalty for taxes unpaid as of October 1, 2020
- 2% penalty for taxes unpaid as of November 1, 2020; and
- 2% penalty for taxes unpaid by December 1, 2020.

Utility Fees - Council also provided staff with the following direction with regards to the City's utilities:

- The 10% penalty for unpaid utility fees has been waived until May 31st at which time Council may consider extending the date.
- Sewer fees have been decreased by 16.8%;
- Sewer infrastructure fees have been decreased by 25%; and
- Garbage collection fees have been reduced by 30%.

Mill Rate - Also for 2020, Council will implement a zero percent mill rate increase, instead of the planned 4.5% to Residential, 10% to Major Industry and 6.32% to light industry and 2% for Commercial; and furthermore Council approved an additional decrease of 5% to the Commercial mill rate.

Public Park Policy

In these times, we must listen to medical professionals, and we must act responsibly to protect our community and our families. The BC Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth has declared a Provincial state of emergency in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic.

BC's provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry has declared a public health emergency. The directive from Dr. Henry is to self-isolate and practice social distancing.

The City of Dawson Creek has closed all public playground equipment, and outdoor fitness facilities. However, the City's priorities and maintenance plan as the weather warms will be to rake the boulevards on 8th Street and 116th Avenue, evaluate parks, playgrounds, and green spaces, and repair damages incurred over the winter.

As the mowing season approaches, our goal is to maintain the parks, and green spaces as well as City owned lots. The parks department will continue its weeding, trees and trimming as well as garbage pick-up programs throughout our parks.

Walking paths continue to remain open; however, we are asking the public to follow all health guidelines such as physical distancing, cover your sneeze and cough, avoid touching your face, and if you are sick please stay home. Please show respect for all users of our trails and make sure you leave a minimum distance of two metres.

**Stay one eagle width
away – 2 metres**



City Hall Temporary Layoffs

Some jobs affected April 10th

The COVID -19 pandemic is an unprecedented situation, and the preventative measures taken by the City has affected the daily lives of all employees and the City of Dawson Creek operations.

As a result, the City has issued temporary layoffs as of April 10th to 75 employees, with 47 of them holding casual employment positions. In addition to these temporary layoffs, 13 seasonal positions will also not be filled.

"During this challenging time that we are all facing, the City needed to make some very difficult decisions about our staffing level," said Blair Lekstrom, Chief Administrative Officer. "We will do all we can to bring back our valued employees as soon as possible, with our hope that it is in the not too distant future."

"We value and appreciate the commitment these employees bring to our City and look forward to the day where we get our community, facilities and employees back to full operation for the benefit of everyone," said Mayor Dale Bumstead. "The City will continue to provide our core services to the citizens of Dawson Creek with water, sewer, public works, and public safety."

Update, as of May, the City of Dawson Creek will be able to hire back 11 temporary laid off staff for seasonal work.

Provincial Regular Property Tax Deferment Program

Payment of property taxes can be a concern for some residents, and even more so during the current COVID-19 situation. This is a friendly reminder that the Province of BC offers a low interest loan program – the Regular Property Tax Deferment Program.

This program allows qualified applicants to defer paying all or part of their property taxes on their principal residence and is available for the following:

- Seniors 55 or older,
- A surviving spouse,
- Or persons with disabilities.

To see if you qualify and to review all qualifications and requirements in detail to ensure eligibility, visit the government of BC website before applying.

When to apply:

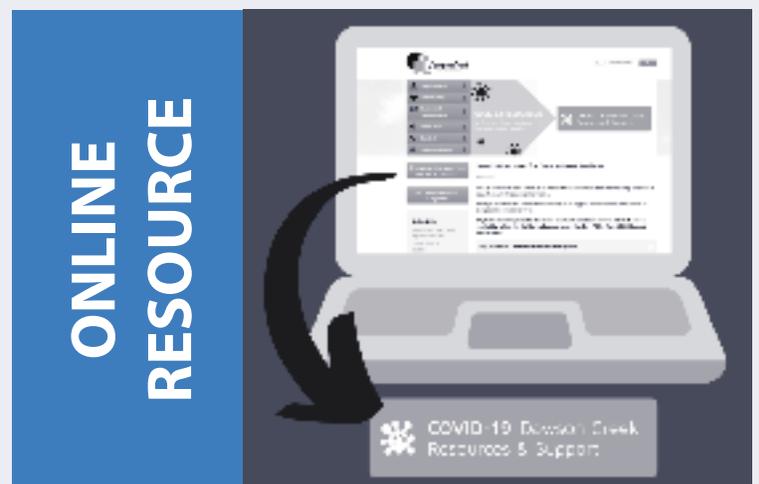
Applicants can submit an application at any time during the current taxation year. However, it is recommended that applicants apply after receiving their property tax notice and before their property taxes are due.

Please be advised that applications applied after the property tax due date are subject to payment of any late penalties before the current year taxes can be deferred. The program only applies to the current year taxes for deferral. Applications will not be received past December 31st.

New Waste Management

Green for Life (GFL) Environmental has been awarded the City of Dawson Creek contract for solid waste (garbage) collection, and will begin May 4th. Contractor, Waste Management, will continue to collect recycling.

Garbage and Recycling scheduled days will remain the same. However, during the change to the new service provider, regular pick up times may be affected for garbage and recycling. Residents are advised to ensure that bins continue to be placed by curbside by 7am on their current scheduled day.



For easy to locate COVID-19 information, a COVID-19 Dawson Creek Resources and Support web page has been created on the City of Dawson Creek website that offers helpful local information, resources and links, as well as important links to other Provincial and Federal support related to the COVID-19 situation. **Look for the button on the homepage of the City of Dawson Creek website.**

CITY CONTACT INFORMATION

Although City facilities are closed until further notice, residents can still reach City Hall staff during regular business hours Monday-Friday from 8:30am-4:30pm by calling 250.784. 3600.

Staff can also be reached through email. A list of staff with their direct emails can be found on the City of Dawson Creek website, or emails can be sent to admin@dawsoncreek.ca.