



LUSH VALLEY

Food Access and Local Food System- COVID19 Impacts Comox Valley Briefing Note from March 16 - April 3, 2020

*we will attempt to provide shorter weekly updates going forward.

Over the past few weeks organizations and individuals who are working across the food sector including community and health agencies have been mobilizing to plan and meet the food needs of our community and to gather information about what they are seeing happen in terms of food and food systems in our communities locally and globally. LUSH Valley and the Comox Valley Food Policy Council has been working with our partners on an emergency response.

LUSH Valley and CV Food Policy Council Emergency Food Access Response:

Week of March 16-20th

- Organized an emergency food response as the Food Bank was out of food. Reached out to businesses, restaurants, farmers and neighbourhoods to distribute food to the Food Bank and 5 other key agencies.
- Fundraised through individual donors to purchase food and grocery store gift cards (now up to \$8,000 in gift cards purchased) and reached out to agencies for distribution.
- Planned for the launch of 2 emergency food delivery only programs:
 - 1. Hot Meal program (serving 1000 meals a week)
 - 2. Good Food Box (healthy hamper delivery program- 1000 deliveries a week)

March 23- 27

- Continued delivery of food and gift cards to those in need (Food Bank is temporarily closed)
- Created and launched an online platform <https://lushvalley.org/food-share/> and call centre to gather information on individuals, and agencies' food access needs and developed a plan to serve them.
 - Platform enables businesses and farmers to donate food.
 - Hired a coordinator to support emergency food programs
- Secured locations with the City of Courtenay and the CVRD for emergency food services.
- Launched "Grow Food Everywhere Campaign" to support home gardeners to grow food through
 - Education via a Facebook Group and LUSH Website that already has 600 followers
 - Planning for the distribution of seeds soils and seedings
- Share the Harvest community gardens continue, but tool sharing is not available at this time.
- Began planning LUSH fruit and farm gleaning programs with COVID protocol in order to continue the programs safely.
- CV Farmers Market- they are developing an on-line market. LUSH offered help with aggregation and delivery of local produce. Farmers Markets are considered an essential service to remain open with safety protocol in place.
- Cumberland working to launch their own Cumberland Food Share initiative- sharing resources and partnering with LUSH regional Food Share initiative.

LUSH Valley Food Action Society

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March 31 - April 3

- Launched a Hot meal delivery program on Wednesday April 1st serving 300 meals and froze another 300 for later distribution. Schedule is nearly full for next week with capacity for 1000 meals a week.
- Good Food Hamper program to start grocery delivery on April 8th- goal of 50 a day for first week- to scale to 200 a day for 1000 a week.

Partners we are serving and/or collaborating with: CV Community Health Network, CV Food Bank, CV Family Services, BC Housing and Washington Inn, Coalition to end Homelessness, CV Transition Society, Salvation Army, SD71, Salvation Army, Better at Home, Sonshine Lunch Club, Eureka Support Society, Peppermill Program (OT through VIHA), Mental Health and Substance Use, CV Farmers Market, CV Recovery Center, John Howard as well as individuals not associated with an organization and others groups which have indicated need but have not yet shared details.

Other Agencies and Food Program Considerations

Many agencies have had to shut down their premises and food programs due to the lack of COVID protocols and because of food shortages due to food hoarding. The Food Bank closed for a week and reopened with new COVID protocol in place (March 31).

The Salvation Army continues to provide a 30-person hamper program while the Sonshine Lunch Club has switched to a bagged lunch service (but are now going to receive two days of hot meals from the hot meal delivery program mentioned above).

The agencies that are still serving food are working to put in place COVID19 protocols including social distancing and sanitization so that they can continue food services and related social programming. They are also trying to support individuals with their own sanitization needs when receiving food, although this has been difficult in some locations. A huge thank-you goes to Wayward Distillery for supplying hand sanitizer to many of these frontline groups.

Most agencies are anticipating a steady increase to need for food services however those that rely on volunteers are finding drop-in volunteers, especially as many are elderly

Immediate Needs:

Emergency Food Access Programs:

1. Food and equipment, warehouse staff, delivery drivers and cleaners-. Hot meal (1000meals a week for 20 weeks) - \$25, 000. Good Food Box (1000 boxes a week for 20 weeks) \$130, 000. *budgets have been developed for 4 months of programming and are available on request (50% of funding is secure).

** Expectation is that need will grow especially as we start to serve SD71 students in need and their families (i.e. Hot Meal program almost already at capacity).

2. Need for direct support for distribution of food (*Victoria is using school buses and bus drivers to distribute food to students), security of sites, and warehouse workers.
3. Support for local food aggregation and distribution through good food box site.

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Support for Food Growers, processors and vendors:

1. Encouraging our local food producers and processors to increase production (To ensure our supply of food isn't interrupted in the weeks and months ahead) supporting our local economy and keeping people employed.
2. Incentives to encourage local farm labour, (LUSH Valley is working on partnering farm gleaning volunteers with local farmers as farm labourers.)

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