



LUSH VALLEY

Food Access and Local Food Systems- COVID19 Impacts Comox Valley B-weekly Briefing May 11- May 22, 2020

Comox Valley Highlights:

- Emergency programs registration seems somewhat stabilized with minor fluctuations in the last couple of weeks, around 1200-1400.
- LUSH emergency programs and others affected by Phase 2 opening, such as loss of busses, drivers, warehouse support and cook. Volunteer support and others being recruited to fill the gap. CVRD has followed up with LUSH. Waiting for Canada Summer Jobs decision.
- Work BC asking for 'restart' plans for nonprofits, restaurants and other food -related businesses -- organizations will need this for staff standards.
- Food supply disruption planning subcommittee continues looking at various ways to bring food supply and food security into the emergency response and ensure community planning for food disruptions.
- Urban agriculture and gardening continue to be very popular. New municipal policies to support this continue to gain traction (Comox and Courtenay actively).
- Local farmer follow-up has begun based on survey results showing farmers need for labour, secure markets, promotion, delivery and aggregation.

Emergency Food Programs:

- **LUSH Valley-** working with over 20 agency partners
 - HOT MEAL PROGRAM: Total # clients registered 459
 - Total meals served last two week (hot + frozen meals): 1,710
 - Total meals served since program start (hot + frozen meals): 5,254
 - GOOD FOOD BOX: Approximate # households registered 480
 - Total Good Food Boxes Delivered last two weeks: 670
 - Approximate # Good Food Boxes since program start: 1928
 - *Additional stress on programs as schools and restaurants move to restart and LUSH loses a chef and school district labour support.
 - *LUSH emergency programs support local farmers and food producers by purchasing 20% or more local food for Good Food Box.
- **Cumberland Food Share:** May 14, delivered 34 hampers serving 110 individuals. May 21 delivered 33 hampers serving 109 individuals.
- **The Food Shed** is well used, with donations being dropped off regularly and community members helping themselves to what they need.
- ***Other groups** providing emergency food services in the Comox Valley (stats unavailable): CV Food Bank, Salvation Army, K'omoks First Nation, Black Creek Food Bank, Denman Island Education Society, Wachiay Friendship Centre, Sonshine Lunch Club, CV Family Services and others.

(Please send additional stats/info re these programs to: Maurita@lushvalley.org).



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Comox Valley Food Production Programs/Activities:

- Skipper Otto ocean fishing and seafood Community Supported Fisheries (CSF) has announced a Comox Valley pick-up location at Amara Farm, North Courtenay, and is asking for new local members to purchase shares by May 31. (<https://skipperotto.com/signup/>)
- **LUSH:** Grow Food Everywhere Facebook page: Community gardens, food growing supplies and education. Seedlings and seed distribution to Indigenous education. Sowing squash for distribution at Vanier Garden.
- Weekly on-line food growing tutorials with local experts <https://lushvalley.org/events/>
- Weekly podcast Community Food Security in a Pandemic- <https://lushvalley.org/podcast/>. Episode #4: Food Security the long game: Importance of investing in infrastructure, policy, food producers and Emergency Response for long term food security. Episode #5: LTNC (see below)
- **Lake Trail Neighbourhood Connections:** Squash Hunger program -- planting squash across the Comox Valley for fall distribution.

Food Systems Federal and Provincial news

- A Report comes from Western Agriculture: Grassroots Public Affairs surveyed 1,004 Canadians during April 16 to 20, 2020, and they conclude that COVID-19 has made Canadians more aware and concerned about their food supply. 64% of Canadians believe that hunger and food insecurity will worsen in future as a result of COVID-19. 92% endorse government support for the agriculture and agri-food sector. 87% believe that agriculture and agri-food is a leading economic driver in Canada 97% trust the quality of food grown or produced domestically.
- Restart BC and Government Supports: Many sectors, including Agriculture and Seafood, are encouraged to make plans and establish protocols on how they can operate safely in line with Public Health and Safety Guidelines. For more details, visit <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/covid-19-response>
- Restaurant owners across the province have been given the green light to begin again inviting guests to enjoy meals while sitting inside their brick-and-mortar establishments. BC's new restaurant safety rules laid out include distancing, strategic staff scheduling, and contact collecting. <https://www.vicnews.com/business/b-c-restaurants-can-host-dine-in-guests-next-week-but-what-will-that-look-like/>
- Many of the temporary foreign workers have now completed their quarantine in Vancouver hotels and are heading out to work on Vancouver Island farms. This is welcome to many of the farms who rely on them, that have been struggling to get the work done, but also wondering about their plans for summer planting, maintenance and harvesting.
- Also support for Buy Local initiatives: The province is providing \$300k to Buy BC e-commerce initiatives for farmers, food processors.

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- On May 14 the federal government announced some support for fish harvesters: The government of Canada will launch the Fish Harvester Benefit, a program worth up to \$267.6 million, to help provide income support for this year's fishing seasons to eligible self-employed fish harvesters who cannot access the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. Fish harvesters are seeing some support from the federal government. Spot prawns -- the season is delayed but will go forward starting on June 4, 2020.
- More than 900 of Cargill's 2,000 workers have tested positive for the novel coronavirus and one worker has died, making the processing plant the site of the largest single COVID-19 outbreak in Canada. The union that represents the workers is asking a court to stop work at the plant and has also filed unfair labour practice complaints against Cargill and the province.
- The government is also adding \$125 million to the Agri-Recovery Fund, a federal-provincial-territorial program aimed at helping farmers during disasters.

Province and the Charitable sector:

- There is significant stress on the charitable sector organizations having to re-invent the way they are providing services as they face the loss of volunteers, staff layoffs, and fears of donor fatigue while the efforts are continuing. We are seeing an increase in collaboration between agencies in working to respond to the people they serve.
- A recently released survey conducted by the Victoria Foundation and Vancouver Foundation of over 1,000 non profits in British Columbia finds that 92% are seeing an increase in stress, half fear they will not be able to operate over six more months, and over half are also seeing an increased demand in their services. <https://victoriafoundation.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/no-immunity-report-hires.pdf>

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