

Common Roots Urban Farm BiHi Park
% MetroWorks Employment Association
7071 Bayers Rd, Suite LL05
B3L 2C2

April 25, 2020

Dear Premier Stephen McNeil and Dr. Robert Strang,

As a result of the [provincial closure](#) of municipal parks and school grounds, access to community gardens that are located in those areas has effectively been suspended.

In response to these closures, a group of representatives from community gardens, food organizations and school gardens have come together to discuss how we suggest safely moving forward to access these gardens to produce much needed food for our communities.

Community gardens have been found to improve both community and individual health, particularly in high density neighbourhoods where people do not have access to back yards. With the proper health protection measures in place, the benefits of supporting access to food gardens in municipal parks and on school properties outweigh any potential risks.

Community gardens are critical and much needed food production spaces. There are hundreds of families in the HRM and across the province, many of whom are food insecure, who rely on these gardens to provide healthy, fresh and culturally appropriate food options, and for mental well-being. Especially right now, lack of food security is a serious health concern. It is incredibly important that these garden spaces are able to produce food. Growing food in community gardens has the added benefit of decreasing the number of people in busy stores and using food banks.

Given the legal obligation to maintain social distancing and protect public health, we are suggesting a tiered approach that recognises the need to access community gardens in municipal parks and school grounds, while restricting the number of gardeners who can use the garden at any one time.

Immediately, we are requesting that a limited number of garden staff/members have access to the garden, maintaining proper social distancing, to prepare beds, and plant and grow food for the community. Following that, as soon as protocols for safe garden use have been identified, we request that gardeners have access to their individual plots, while still maintaining proper social distancing.

Given the short Nova Scotia growing season and the early arrival of Spring this year, this request is extremely time sensitive because gardens are ready to be planted now and could yield first harvest by mid to late May.

We suggest the following “dos and don’t” and welcome further consultation with government officials and Health Care professionals to support a safe, gradual and orderly return to the community gardens.

Suggested community garden protocol:

Do’s

- Follow requirements of Health Protection Act Order
- Mark the boundaries of each community garden with temporary fencing to clearly demarcate the area available for use by members of the community garden.
- Include signage saying ‘no public access’
- Install a hand washing station
- Maintain social distancing of 2 metres minimum
- Wear gloves
- Disinfect any common tools
- Restrict number of gardeners using the community garden at any one time

Don’ts

- Allow public access
- Visit the garden if you have Covid-19 or are experiencing symptoms
- Hold any group meetings, in person workshops, or other gatherings

Thank you for taking the time to consider this important issue. We are available for further consultation as needed.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding guidelines for safe community garden use on municipal and school grounds and immediate access for a limited number of garden members to prepare the gardens for the season.

Sincerely,

Sara Burgess, Coordinator, Common Roots Urban Farm BiHi Park, a project of MatroWorks

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endorsed by:

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