



CORPORATE REPORT

To: Electoral Area Services Committee

Date: 2021-01-14

From: Tarina Colledge, Emergency Management Specialist

File No: 0230-24-UBCM

Subject: Letter to UBCM recommending a Permanent Committee on Emergency Management

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board authorize the Board Chair to sign and send the attached letter to the Union of BC Municipalities requesting that the UBCM Flood and Wildfire Advisory Committee evolve into a permanent committee on emergency management.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services
Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

PRIORITIES

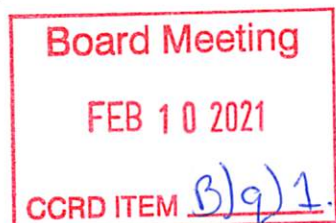
Priority #3 Flood Protection & Management

BACKGROUND

The Province of BC is modernizing the *Emergency Program Act* – the provincial legislation that governs local government Emergency Management activities. The Province has identified the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) as the primary vehicle for consulting with local governments on the changes to the legislative framework for Emergency Management in BC.

FVRD is an active member of the UBCM Flood and Wildfire Advisory Committee. In response to the effort by the Province to update the *Emergency Program Act*, the role of this committee has evolved to consider emergency management more broadly. Flood and wildfires are not the only emergencies faced by local government, and the committee focus has shifted to advising and engaging in regards to the emergency management legislative modernization.

There is an opportunity for UBCM to formally expand the mandate of the committee to emergency management rather than a more narrow focus on flood and wildfires. This change would position the committee to better engage with the Province to achieve the best outcomes for local governments with respect to the new Emergency Management legislation. The UBCM committee would be well positioned to ensure that the new Emergency Management legislation is aligned with the suite of legislation under which local governments operate.



DISCUSSION

FVRD Staff have been participating in the UBCM Flood and Wildfire Advisory committee, which was created initially in response to the floods and wildfires of 2018. The focus of this committee has shifted to advising and collaborating with Provincial staff on the modernization of the provincial emergency management legislation.

A discussion paper (Modernizing BC's Emergency Management Legislation, Oct, 2019) indicated the direction the Province intends to go with new Emergency Management legislation. A number of local governments, including FVRD, raised concerns about overlap and potential inconsistencies between the potential new legislation and the existing acts governing regional districts and municipalities. Modernizing Emergency Management, through the lens of one suite of legislation, has the potential to create gaps between the *Local Government Act*, the *Community Charter*, and *Municipal Finance Act*. For example, proposed changes involve budgetary impacts to local governments without addressing methods to resource additional assigned responsibilities in implementing the Province's programs.

UBCM can help facilitate modernization and continuance of local government emergency management practices in greater alignment with local government operations as a whole to ensure the modernization is respectful of the entire legislative framework under which we operate. Evolving the UBCM Flood and Wildfire Advisory Committee is the ideal next step to implement proper consultation and collaboration through the next phases of local government emergency management modernization.

COST

There are no costs associated with this report.

CONCLUSION

Staff have engaged with UBCM to discuss possible options and believe that moving the UBCM Flood and Wildfire Advisory Committee to a permanent committee on emergency management is the next step to ensure modernization of emergency management is met with fulsome and meaningful consultation respectful of the framework under which local governments operate.

COMMENTS BY:

Graham Daneluz, Director of Planning & Development: Reviewed and supported.

Kelly Lownsborough, Chief Financial Officer/ Director of Finance: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer:

Reviewed and supported.



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President Brian Frenkel
Union of BC Municipalities
Suite 60-10551 Shellbridge Way
Richmond, BC V6X 2W9

RE: UBCM Flood and Wildfire advisory committee

Dear President Frenkel,

Fraser Valley Regional District is grateful to participate in the UBCM Flood and Wildfire Advisory Committee. We commend the evolution of the Emergency Management framework in British Columbia and the work of UBCM and the Province of BC.

Through participation in this committee, we recognize a notable gap with respect to fulsome and meaningful consultation with municipalities and regional districts as envisioned within the spirit of the *Local Government Act* and *Community Charter*. The Flood and Wildfire Advisory Committee was a positive first step in building a framework for consultation and communication.

The field of Emergency Management is vast and fragmented. Local emergency programs are implemented and interpreted with broad variance across the province. The lack of centralized communication channels or common approaches results in consultation and comprehension gaps. Many appointed with the responsibility for local government emergency management programs operate under banners of Fire/Rescue Services, Police Services, or external contract; rarely interacting with the local government framework. Contractors operate solely within the context of their agreement with little engagement with senior leadership in their organizations.

Modernizing Emergency Management through the lens of one suite of legislation has the potential to create gaps in the correlation between the *Local Government Act*, *Community Charter*, and *Municipal Finance Act*, among other legislative suites. Local governments are struggling to address current mandates, in addition to reviewing and providing feedback on initiatives that are launched without advance consultation for alignment of the local government framework.

The UBCM places an emphasis on communication with local governments and consultation with orders of government. FVRD suggests there may be an opportunity for UBCM to facilitate greater and continued engagement in the field of local government emergency management, potentially by transitioning the Flood and Wildfire Advisory Committee into a Standing Committee for Emergency Management to foster clear communication and consultation processes into place, bridging the gaps with local government emergency management. Additionally, the inclusion of engagement with the BC Association of Emergency Managers in a standing committee could be considered as a method to ensure effective outreach and input from the practitioner audience. This would be of mutual benefit to Emergency Management BC and local governments across the province.

By fostering a collaborative approach to local government emergency management initiatives, together we can ensure effective partnerships that support and sustain a safer British Columbia in alignment with the all-of-society approach in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jason Lum, Chair



CORPORATE REPORT

To: Electoral Area Services Committee

Date: 2021-02-11

From: Tarina Colledge, Emergency Management Specialist

File No: 7130-01-General

Subject: Changes to Emergency Response Cost Compensation & EMBC's Finance Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Electoral Area Services Committee of information pertaining to anticipated changes in the eligibility for compensation from the Province for emergency operations centres and emergency response costs. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

BACKGROUND

Under the *Emergency Program Act* and the *Compensation and Disaster Financial Assistance Regulation*, local governments can receive financial assistance from the Province for eligible costs incurred during an emergency event, as well as for some post-disaster recovery costs. Emergency Management BC (EMBC) provides a guide that identifies eligible costs and the procedures for making claims.

DISCUSSION

The Province is modernizing the framework for the delivery of emergency management services in BC. As a step in this modernization, a new *Finance Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations – Response Costs* was released on November 3, 2020. It was intended by the Province to come into force on November 30, 2020.

The guide identifies the types of costs - incurred by local authorities during emergencies - that can be recovered from the Province. It includes some important changes that appear to reduce recoverable costs and thereby increase costs to the local authority.

Early areas of concern include, but are not limited to:

- » compensation thresholds for Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) shift lengths
- » potential limitations on EOC expenses that are not pre-approved by the EMBC regional offices
- » compensation limitations on contracts and contractors
- » ineligibility of overtime for staff working in EOCs
- » ineligibility of compensation for staff supporting ESS
- » increasing specific considerations regarding evacuation cost eligibility

Many of the changes in the new finance guide demonstrate that local governments will be responsible to prepare for costs of emergency response which were previously recoverable.

FVRD staff asked EMBC to delay the implementation of the Finance Guide to give local governments time to review the pending changes and provide input (see the attached letter dated November 30, 2020). Staff also asked EMBC to provide a list of changes to facilitate our review.

In response to concerns raised by local governments, including FVRD, the implementation date was delayed, and EMBC is now inviting feedback on the Guide. EMBC intends for the new guidelines to become effective in November 2021.

Staff will complete a more thorough review of the new *Finance Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations – Response Costs* and bring a report to the EASC in the coming months. Comments can then be returned to EMBC for their consideration.

COST

This report does not address potential cost implications of the proposed *Finance Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations – Response Costs*.

COMMENTS BY:

Graham Daneluz, Director of Planning & Development: Reviewed and supported. This report indicates the great extent to which local governments are intertwined with the Province when it comes to emergency management. Even relatively minor changes in policy and direction at the provincial level can have important implications for local authorities. As a result, it is critical that the Province consult local governments on proposed changes and time to respond to forthcoming changes, particularly where there are budgetary implications.

Kelly Lownsborough, Chief Financial Officer/ Director of Finance: Reviewed and supported. Understanding the implications of these changes, potential financial impacts, and associated risks that need to be considered in future years' budgets are critical.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.



November 30, 2020

File: 7130-01-General

Ian Cunnings
Senior Regional Manager
Emergency Management BC
South West Regional Office
14292 Green Timbers Way
Surrey, BC V3T 0J4

Dear Mr. Cunnings:

**RE: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE
COSTS: A GUIDE FOR FIRST NATIONS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES
UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2020**

The Government of BC has been making significant strides to modernize the suite of emergency management legislation. Efforts to modernize are greatly needed and the Province of BC should be commended for this long needed pursuit.

On November 3, 2020, Emergency Management BC, through its Regional offices, distributed by email a complete replacement of the previous Financial Assistance Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations, written in 2005 with revisions in 2008. On November 19, 2020, FVRD staff reached out to the SWE Regional office to request a list of changes to help us understand the new document. This request could not be met by the regional office.

The email, which included the replacement guide, makes reference to the scope and scale of emergencies having changed significantly in the past years and states that this new guide has been released to clarify Emergency Management BC's guidance regarding response costs. Notably, the Compensation and Disaster Financial Assistance Regulation has not faced corresponding changes, nor has the Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation.

The implied changes in the newly distributed guide have the ability to create great additional expenses to Local Governments with potentially significant cost implications. This new guide has been released without reasonable notice very late in our budgeting process for 2021. We have not have an opportunity to assess the budgeting impacts for the coming year of the changes set out in the new guide. The lack of time to analyze these implied changes and adjust budgets accordingly could affect our ability to respond to emergencies or result in significant budget shortfalls next year for emergency response costs.

Section 2 of the Community Charter sets out principles for the relationship between the Province and Local Governments. It states that consultation is needed where changes to Provincial programs are proposed that will have a significant impact on matters within the local government authority.

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Fraser Valley Regional District is requesting the Province of BC provide a fulsome opportunity to review the new guide and a meaningful opportunity to provide feedback for consideration by the Province before any of the changes outlined in the new guide are implemented.

If I can be of any assistance, please contact me at 604 702 5046 or by email at gdaneluz@fvrd.ca. I am responsible for the emergency management service at FVRD.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours truly,

Graham Daneluz
Director of Planning & Development