

City Staff Report

Original signed by: City Manager Johnson

Report Date: February 14, 2018

Meeting Date: February 20, 2018

To: Mayor & Council

From: City Manager

Subject: Follow Up to Abbott Visit re: Flood and Wildfire Strategic Review

Purpose

The Province is currently collecting input as part of a strategic review of the Province's emergency management system. The goal of this review is to provide the Province with recommendations that can assist with improving its systems, processes and procedures related to Emergency Management.

The City met with George Abbott, who was appointed by the Province to co-lead this review, and provided him with feedback. In addition the City will be submitting a formal response to the review. The purposes of this report is to outline key areas of concern for the City, to collect Council input, and to get a Council resolution supporting this response.

Summary

In November 21, 2017 staff provided Council a detailed review of the response by the City and various local agencies the 2017 Wildfire Emergency, this information is available on our website.

Key issues for Provincial emergency planning consideration include the following:

- 1. Ongoing funding support is provided for an Emergency Planning Coordinator position.** This Emergency highlighted the fact that our internal emergency management processes were outdated, not very well documented and not well exercised. This level of preparedness seems to be mirrored in other key agencies in the City. It should be noted that this is not a criticism of the actual response efforts to the Wildfire.

The Province should be investing in an Emergency Management Coordinator position in each urban centre to ensure that planning is kept current, that key stakeholders and agencies in the community have well coordinated plans and that everyone involved in emergency response is well trained. In addition, this person could take a key role in an Emergency Operations Centre if needed. This position would not have to be a City employee, it may be more successful on a wider community basis if it were a Provincial position based in Quesnel.
- 2. Another key issue is ongoing funding support for Emergency Planning in general.** The Province committed to making funding available for improving emergency management at the local government level. The City applied for a grant to this end. The problem with this grant funding available through UBCM, is the narrow restrictions regarding spending eligibility.

One of the recognized needs for the City is to further develop the city-wide evacuation protocol, including coordinating this with other key agencies who may need evacuation (such as NHA). This will be a time consuming piece of work and requires significant stakeholder meetings to make effective. However, it is not an eligible expense for the UBCM grant. **Emergency Planning funding should be made available on a regular basis with a wider range of discretion on eligible expenditures.**
- 3. The Emergency Social Services volunteer group provided outstanding service in this emergency response. The ESS evacuee registration and voucher system for purchases needs to be modernized.** The current process is highly repetitive over a longer response period and is fully paper based, adding significant volunteer time just processing paperwork.



4. The Fire Base which was established at the Quesnel Airport was a critical piece of infrastructure which played a significant role in the firefighting efforts. Currently, City taxpayers subsidize the airport without regular contributions by the Province. **The Province should providing ongoing funding assistance for smaller airports which may become critical resources during emergency responses.**
5. One issue which has been discussed in the aftermath of the Wildfire event, was the concept of a sub-regional Emergency Operations Centre. When the land base of the Regional District was widely impacted (North, Central and South Cariboo all had simultaneous wildfire events), there would have been local advantages to having a sub-regional EOC. **A recommendation to the Province would be to investigate the legislative changes required if a sub-regional approach was determined by the local government (municipality and regional district) to be the best approach to a given emergency situation.**

Recommendation

THAT Council supports the following recommendations to the Province:

- Ongoing funding support is provided for an Emergency Planning Coordinator position,
- Emergency Planning funding should be made available on a regular basis with a wider range of discretion on eligible expenditures,
- The ESS evacuee registration and voucher system for purchases needs to be modernized,
- Ongoing funding assistance needs to be provided for smaller airports which may become critical resources during emergency responses, and
- Investigate the legislative changes required if a sub-regional approach was determined by the local government (municipality and regional district) to be the best approach to a given emergency situation.