



## **Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of June 21, 2018**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole

**Date:** June 4, 2018

**From:** Paul Bruce, Fire Chief

**Subject:** Emergency Management Program Funding

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive this report for information.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to advise Council how staff are allocating funding from the \$250,000.00 assigned to Emergency Management for continuation and implementation of the following projects and initiatives.

#### **1. Public Notification System (Vic-Alert):**

The City of Victoria implemented its Emergency Public Notification system, Vic-Alert, in May 2017, with the expectation to eventually have 20% of our population signed up on the system, based on research from other Cities. In January 2018, prior to the tsunami warning there were approximately 6800 subscribers to Vic-Alert (8% of our population). After the Tsunami warning on Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>, our subscribers increased to over 60,000 subscribers (71%). Due to this drastic increase in subscribers, our provider, Connect Rocket, has had to expand our system by adding additional lines, etc.... to ensure we are able to send out accurate and timely messages to 60,000 people. The Province has implemented its new Alert Ready system which will be used by Emergency Management BC to issue Tsunami warnings only using intrusive messaging. This system does not replace the need for Vic-Alert.

Differences between Provincial Alert Ready system and Vic-Alert include:

- Vic-Alert is able to send geographical specific messages for those who opt into our system
- Provincial system will only work on cell phones with the capability of receiving the alerts (currently approx. 30% of phones)
- Provincial system is not an opt in opt out system
- Provincial only will send notifications for tsunami warnings whereas Local authorities can send messages for all alerts specific to their geographical area and can send them to specific neighbourhoods.
- The responsibility as per legislation lies with the local authorities to notify their citizens of hazards.

- If a Provincial push alert is sent out it will not provide information on where to go or information specific to local geographical areas, and has the potential to raise panic. Vic-Alert is a tool that can assist with providing specific information to our area, such as locations of reception centres, and important emergency information and updates, and allow us to get in front of the messaging and avoid panic.

The estimated expenditure for expansion of this Public Notification System to meet our current needs, with close to 60,000 subscribers is \$25,000 per year. As alternative technology surrounding this programming becomes available, staff recommend not yet assigning to annual financial planning until review of Request for Proposals are received and definitive costs are calculated. Through maintenance as a “pilot” project and funding through this structure, staff can further ascertain the most efficient program moving forward.

## **2. Emergency Operations Centre Training and Exercises program development:**

The Emergency Program Act (EPA) and the associated regulations provide the legislative framework for the management of disasters and emergencies in B.C.

Local governments must establish and maintain an emergency program and emergency plan appropriate to the community; and an executive and administrative structure to support the ongoing planning, exercise and implementation of the Plan. The updated Emergency Plan was reviewed and approved by Council on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. The next step is to test the plan through practical training and regularly scheduled exercises.

The City of Victoria has many new staff who have never experienced working in an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and, will require initial and ongoing training. The City hosted an EOC Essentials course on March 13-14<sup>th</sup>, which 18 City Staff attended. In order to test the updated emergency plan and ensure all staff who may have a role in the EOC are comfortable and confident with their role and responsibilities in an EOC, staff recommends that additional funding is allocated for departmental staff training and exercises. This would include the development of a multi-year training and exercise plan, which establishes a plan for the training and exercising and continuous review of Business Continuity Plans and Emergency Plan(s). This will include in house Business Continuity and EOC staff training, hosting of JIBC courses, as well as exercising the Business Continuity Plans and a minimum of two Emergency Operation Centre exercises per year at approx. \$25,000 for the exercise development, design, and facilitation. Staff estimate this cost at approximately \$35,000 per year. Once training and exercise plans have been developed and staff have the fundamental baseline of business continuity and emergency operations training complete, this will be maintained and sustainable through internal City staff and will not require additional funding. The estimated time frame to bring the City up to a state of readiness is March 2021.

## **3. Connect and Prepare Pilot:**

The Emergency Management Division partnered with Building Resilient Neighbourhoods to conduct a Pilot project called “Connect and Prepare”. Connect and Prepare is about bringing neighbours together to support and empower themselves in their emergency preparedness. Through a series of facilitated workshops and, with the support of the potential for equipment and/or training assistance and program materials, three participating Victoria neighbourhoods learned how to strengthen their emergency preparedness and community connections. The pilot focused on building and enhancing inclusiveness and resilience-building within local neighbourhoods. Building these relationships allows staff to connect with other stakeholders in our community to further develop well-being and a supportive network when an emergency occurs. The initial pilot was

extremely successful and it is our intention to implement the program and expand with a goal of 9-12 community groups participating per year. Staff will provide up to \$500/ neighbourhood in equipment or training support to inspire and promote each community group with facilitation of their neighbourhood preparedness plans. Determination on fundamental support will be based off their needs, identified during the facilitated workshops. With a target of 12 groups per year; staff anticipate a budget of approximately \$6000/year, over the next three years to develop a robust and measurable program. Again, as a pilot program, staff can assess and report on the success of the program as it is introduced to the neighbourhoods.

#### **4. Agreement with the Canadian Red Cross (CRC) to Deliver Emergency Social Services 3 year Pilot**

In order to effectively and efficiently manage the City's Emergency Management priorities, staff are entering into a contractual agreement with the CRC for Emergency Social Services Response for a three year period. The initial agreement will be operated as a pilot project commencing on September 1, 2018 and expiring on December 31, 2020. The request is for funding to be allocated from the \$250,000 budget line dedicated to City of Victoria Emergency Management. Staff will provide Council with information relating to this transitional service delivery model and provide service efficiency and financial analysis prior to the expiration of the contract to review the model in regards to effectiveness and operational efficiency. Upon Council review and approval, funding for the ongoing provision of this service would be included in the annual financial plan.

Services include the Canadian Red Cross providing recruitment, orientation, placement, training, engagement, response, recognition, and evaluation for all Emergency Social Services volunteers. The Red Cross would work alongside the City's Emergency Management Division to build and manage a highly trained team to provide emergency social service response and assistance to those impacted by emergencies from the initial relief stages right through to recovery. Currently Emergency Social Services is provided for 72 hours by City of Victoria volunteers through Emergency Management BC's ESS program. After 72 hours, the services shift over to the recovery phase to the Red Cross or other NGO's. Partnering with the Red Cross allows us to work together from the beginning of an emergency right through to the recovery process helping to ensure affected residents have access to seamless care and necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, emotional support, and family reunification. Another benefit of partnering with the Red Cross is that volunteers are provided with opportunities to assist in disasters across the Country and gain valuable response experience. Trained Red Cross volunteers already respond to hundreds of disasters every year in B.C., and are part of the world's largest humanitarian network that responds to the needs of communities affected by devastating disasters or health emergencies. Existing VictoriaReady volunteers will help forge the new ESS team under the pilot project and help welcome and train new team members. To enable CRC to build and maintain its capacity (for up to 500 evacuees) to discharge its responsibilities under this Agreement, the City of Victoria would agree to make an annual contribution to CRC of \$30,000 per year to ensure this service arrangement. A disaster with more than 500 evacuees would require the City of Victoria Emergency Management Division to work collaboratively with the Canadian Red Cross in the management of convergent volunteers and other social service agencies to manage the event. This would include working with organizations like the Salvation Army etc.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Council in the allocation of emergency management funding for the following “pilot” programs:

- \$25,000/year towards support of the public notification system
- \$35,000/year = \$70,000 to support training and exercises (inclusive of \$25,000 grant for training to be provided for 2018)
- Up to \$6,000/year for the provision of equipment or training of up to \$500 / community group in order to build a “starter kit” for their Connect and Prepare program
- \$30,000/year for three year pilot project with the Canadian Red Cross for the provision of Emergency Social Services Response

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Vic-Alert**

The Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation of the Emergency Program Act states that a local authority must, as part of the local emergency plan prepared by it under section 6 (2) of the Act, require a periodic review and updating of the local emergency plan and establish a procedure for that review and revision; and establish and maintain for all emergency response staff to whom responsibilities are assigned in the plan, a program of emergency response exercises, and a training program; and establish procedures by which those persons who may be harmed or who may suffer loss are notified of an emergency or impending disaster. This legislation outlines the necessity and responsibility of the City to train, exercise, and establish procedures and systems such as Vic-Alert to notify people in our jurisdiction of emergencies or impending disasters.

### **EOC Training and Exercises**

The City of Victoria recently updated its Hazards, Risks, Vulnerabilities Analysis, Emergency Plan, and completed a Business Impact Analysis and Business Continuity Plans for all City Departments. Now that these plans have been updated and completed, they must be tested for functionality and to ensure staff awareness and understanding of the plans through practical exercise.

The expected outcome of exercises is to identify any areas in planning and/or procedures that can be improved upon, to test and validate the emergency plan, clarify staff roles and responsibilities, and obtain feedback and recommendations for any potential emergency program improvements.

The City of Victoria has incorporated many new technologies that must be tested during the initial exercises. These include:

- Office 365 and SharePoint
- The functionality of the EOC space at the Capital Regional District building
- Skype for business phone system
- Satellite system
- BaseCamp Connect system
- Emergency Management radio system and Auxiliary Communications

## **Connect and Prepare Pilot**

With regards to the Connect and Prepare program, research on past disasters has proven the effectiveness and importance of community connectedness to building resilient communities, who have the ability to mitigate and rebound quickly from disasters. By developing a dedicated connect and prepare program at the block or building level staff are able to greatly increase awareness among neighbours without anyone feeling overwhelmed or isolated. All initial pilot groups spontaneously, on their own, started exploring outward to further develop this to a larger scale around their neighbourhoods. Staff are confident this model will eventually experience the ripple effect by starting small and spreading to the larger neighbourhoods and all communities within Victoria. Feedback staff received from participants was extremely positive and many emphasized the improvement of connections in their community. Even those who initially appeared isolated or skeptical and only wanted to focus on the preparedness aspect of the program, started to see the value of connection and became involved in group planning activities. By investing in community preparedness and connectedness the City is greatly increasing the City's resilience and capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from extraordinary events or disasters.

## **Emergency Social Services Pilot**

Currently Emergency Social Services, are provided through oversight of City of Victoria volunteers through Emergency Management BC's ESS program. The term of assistance (72 hours) may be extended through contact and approval of the Emergency Management BC Regional Director for extenuating circumstances and, once the time frame is established, the next phases of support for recovery are provided through other ESS support organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross (CRC). The Canadian Red Cross provides volunteers trained in family reunification to assist local volunteers and may establish a Central Registration and Inquiry Bureau (CRIB) to respond to large numbers of inquiries from outside the disaster area. Staff experience during the flooding and wildfires last year highlighted the need for greater coordination and collaboration between local ESS programs and the Canadian Red Cross as there was confusion among the thousands of evacuees over the differences between the services being provided by local ESS support and, the Canadian Red Cross. Another lesson learned from the flooding and wildfire season of 2017 was that ESS systems must be modernized in order to create efficiencies. One of the recommended modernizations, is to digitize registration and referrals for ESS. The Red Cross currently has online registrations and training in place, and are working on a separate pilot project with Emergency Management BC to include the modernization of all ESS services across the Province. Staff, through discussion with the Canadian Red Cross, recommend a "long term" establishment of a service agreement with the Canadian Red Cross to provide emergency social services response for the City of Victoria from the onset of the emergency through to the recovery phase. Partnering with the Red Cross in this "pilot" project allows staff to maintain a close working relationship from the beginning of the emergency right through to the recovery process, helping to ensure people have access to seamless care and necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, emotional support, and family reunification.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

By supporting these four programs and initiatives staff will be ensuring continuous improvement to the City of Victoria's emergency program, following legislation set out in the Emergency Program Act, as well as implementing recommendations from the Emergency Program Review. This will allow staff to focus on priority tasks as well as contribute to increase regional capacity building, resulting in longer term efficiencies and additional cost savings. Assessment of these programs



will establish a greater understanding of the expected efficiencies and value, prior to inclusion in the annual financial planning.

### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

As part of the updating process for the Emergency Plan and the associated response plans, staff have taken the approach of developing “all-inclusive” plans which include the recognition of accessibility issues in order to represent the diversity of residents within the City. These plans will be tested and validated during training and exercises. Our Public Notification system currently notifies residents by landline, cell phone, text, or email, and staff will continue to research ways to make it even more accessible. For example, staff have been researching a system implemented in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, which has the ability to notify citizens who are deaf. The Connect and Prepare Program encourages neighbours to help each other and identify strengths and challenges. This program creates community resilience, particularly for those with functional needs.

### *2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan*

Victoria’s Emergency Management objectives are consistent with and complement the 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan objectives, specifically to:

- innovate and lead through internal city planning as well as community programs;
- engage and empower the community through our neighbourhood, volunteer, and education programs;
- facilitate social inclusion and community wellness by consulting with key stakeholders such as the Disability Alliance of BC (DABC) and using the functional needs framework for activities that promote community resilience; and
- plan for emergencies including climate change short and long-term, by taking an all-hazards approach.

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

The current financial plan allocates funding for the emergency program, and emergency management will continue to require ongoing funding in order to ensure a comprehensive emergency program is in place. In addition, Council has allocated \$250,000 and, as part of the planned work, staff will prioritize the needs for emergency management through the introduction of these initiatives. It is anticipated that these programs will require approximately \$70,000 per year from the \$250,000. A grant of \$25,000 has been received for the initial EOC exercises which must be completed by March 29, 2019, which will offset this cost for the first year. Staff will continue to explore and make application for grant programs aligned with the strategies of holistic Emergency Management.

### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

Our Emergency Management activities align with the Official Community Plan goals outlined in Section 18 – Emergency Management:

- Victoria is prepared to deal with known hazards and emerging threats, to limit the adverse impacts of events, and effectively manage emergencies;
- Victoria is able to respond rapidly and effectively to all emergencies, including events with long-term impacts and recovery times; and

- Victorians can rely on significant local sources for food, energy and materials to meet daily needs under emergency conditions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Staff are confident that through implementation of these proposed initiatives and programs for Emergency Preparedness, measured progression and efficiency will result in an effective and efficient program for managing emergency preparedness and response. Through funding allocated to Emergency Management, staff are confident the City of Victoria will be well positioned and working in accordance with Provincial legislation and regional initiatives in the provision of effective and efficient preparation for response and recovery for all types of hazards.

Respectfully submitted,



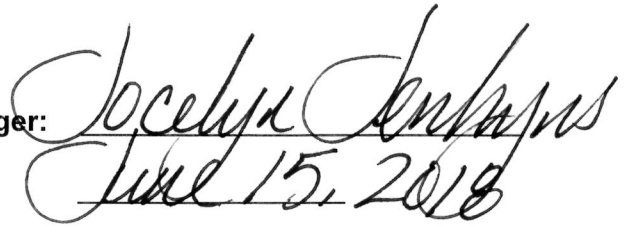
Tanya Patterson  
Emergency Program Coordinator



Paul Bruce  
Fire Chief

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:

  
June 15, 2018

## List of Attachments

- Attachment A - 2017 ESS Approval and Terms & Conditional
- Attachment B - Preparedness through Connectedness "DRAFT"
- Attachment C - Canadian Red Cross – Agreement for the Provision of Emergency Social Services Response