



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of January 10, 2019

To: Committee of the Whole
From: Paul Bruce, Fire Chief
Subject: Evacuation Route Planning Grant

Date: December 13, 2018

RECOMMENDATION

1. Provide council resolution supporting the \$25,000 grant application submitted by staff on November 30th to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) for Evacuation Route Planning.
2. Authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute any agreements related to a successful grant application.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks a Council resolution to support a City of Victoria application to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) for \$25,000 towards Evacuation Route Planning, through the Emergency Management Division of the Victoria Fire Department. The grant application was submitted on November 30th, 2018 and a council resolution is required in order for UBCM to approve the application.

The Community Emergency Preparedness Fund is a suite of funding programs administered by UBCM and is intended to enhance the resiliency of local governments and their residents in responding to emergencies. The intent of the Evacuation Route Planning funding stream is to support eligible applicants to develop Evacuation Route Plans for communities that would otherwise be challenged to successfully undertake an evacuation operation during an emergency.

The local Authority Emergency Management regulation in the Emergency Program Act legislates that:

A local authority must, as part of the local emergency plan prepared by it under section 6 (2) of the Act, 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.

PURPOSE

The evacuation route planning project will:

- Collect data necessary to understand and validate planning assumptions in the City of Victoria.
- Use collected data to create hazard-specific evacuation route maps compatible with the City of Victoria's mapping system Vic-Map (ESRI);
- Engage stakeholders to address key constraints, thresholds and vulnerabilities in the Municipality;
- Provide public information on relevant findings and consistent messaging for mitigation, preparedness and response actions during evacuations;
- Contribute project findings and a portion of any successful grant funding for a consultant to develop an overall Evacuation Route Framework (for regional evacuation route planning) in the Capital Region.

BACKGROUND

The City of Victoria recently updated our Hazards, Risks, Vulnerabilities Analysis which includes multiple hazards that may create the need for evacuations. These include seismic events such as earthquakes and tsunamis, fires, gas leaks, explosions, civil disorder, terrorism, etc.

The tsunami event of January 23rd demonstrated the need for a coordinated approach to evacuations, and to regional messaging in case of evacuations and sheltering-in-place. With more recent examples of interface wildfire injuries and deaths among evacuees in similar jurisdictions, such as Washington, Oregon, and California, communities in the Capital Region are motivated to reduce the risks through advanced evacuation route planning.

There are 13 municipalities and 3 electoral areas in the Capital Region and a successful evacuation is dependent on cooperation and coordination with neighbouring local authorities. The collation of the data collected from each individual municipality will be imperative in assisting with evacuations of residents and livestock. There is currently no legislation in place that mandates regional planning for evacuations, and no regional framework has been undertaken. The existing planning efforts that are taking place allow the combination of updating of local plans with the creation of a regional framework, realizing efficiencies in both time and cost. This will also allow us to better understand our limitations regionally in order to make informed decisions and ultimately ensure the safety of residents.

A regional evacuation framework will also enhance the work being done by the Regional Emergency Management Partnership in development of a Regional Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, and well as a Regional Concept of Operations.

The City of Victoria currently has a generic Evacuation Plan that requires updating and exercising. The existing generic plan provides a general overview of responsibilities, policies, and procedures. It sets out the command structure to be used in an evacuation following the guidance provided by the BC Evacuation Operational Guidelines of 2009 and includes general checklists for Incident Command Post (ICP) and EOC functions.

The City of Victoria's Emergency Plan requires hazard specific and more detailed evacuation route planning to be included and tested to confirm critical procedures, such as notifying residents of safe routes to follow in an evacuation and adapting evacuation routes to account for road closures or fires.

Under the proposed project, the City of Victoria would contract a qualified consultant to lead the advanced evacuation route planning effort for inclusion in the regional overall response and recovery plan.

To build on the City of Victoria's Emergency Plan, the proposed project calls for targeted research and evacuation route planning, including the involvement of individuals and organizations that may be required to assist with a major evacuation of the community.

The project will also address the need for regional collaboration and cooperation for response during an emergency, specific to evacuation procedures for the region.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Acknowledging the constraints of the physical geography, population fluctuations, limited road networks and bridges, this project will validate planning assumptions for evacuations both locally and regionally, while providing tools and templates to maximize the potential of a successful evacuation.

Regionally, there are several challenges with a large population, limited road networks with daily congestion, and multiple local authorities being located in a small area, each responsible for their own emergency plans. While acknowledging the constraints of the physical geography, population distribution and limited road networks, this project will validate planning assumptions for evacuations both locally and regionally, while providing tools and templates to maximize the potential of a successful evacuation. The results of this project may provide support and rationale for future mitigation efforts both locally and regionally.

This project will also enhance the awareness and preparedness among residents, engage them in neighbourhood resilience, and ensure consistent public messaging across the Capital Region. It is understood that with current resourcing available, any successful evacuation requires the participation of residents. The project highlights the need for and reliance on regional support and coordination in an evacuation, such as during a major wildfire or tsunami warning. The project will identify specific partners among regional organizations and emphasize their roles and responsibilities to result in a successful evacuation. This example of detailed planning will allow all communities in the Capital Region to increase their potential of a successful evacuation, and increase resilience in the process.

This project will provide valuable information regarding the overall ESS capacity of local governments in the Region to help plan for large scale evacuations. This information may include communications, potential reception centre sites, supply inventories, and number of volunteers. Data will be collected on the needs for evacuation assistance during a widespread emergency. It would require the use of spatial data in estimating the number of evacuees (and animals) who may require assistance, and generate maps for use during an actual evacuation.

The Evacuation Framework produced under this project will be used to inform residents and staff of their role in an effective evacuation, including neighbourhood preparedness and public messaging on what services can be expected from ESS and local government.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1: Support the City of Victoria's application for \$25,000 in grant funds through the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (Recommended).

Option 2: That Council decline the endorsement of the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund application.

2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan

Objectives are consistent with and compliment 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, which includes preparedness, planning, and mitigation activities and projects. This project is eligible for up to \$25,000 of grant funding from UBCM, which will assist us in developing robust emergency plans, training, and exercises which will in turn strengthen our capacity to respond to emergencies and disasters in the City of Victoria and the Capital Region. If successful, this \$25,000 would be added to the budget with offsetting funding from this grant.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

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.

Respectfully submitted,



Tanya Patterson
Emergency Program Coordinator



Paul Bruce
Fire Chief

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:


Date: Dec 24, 2018

List of Attachments

Appendix A – 2018 UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund, Evacuation Route Planning Grant Application