

**REPORT TO THE PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23RD, 2008**

SUBJECT **ESTABLISHING A NEW REGIONAL SERVICE FOR EMERGENCY PROGRAM SUPPORT, AN ADVISORY COMMISSION TO THE SERVICE, AND TO AMEND THE REGIONAL EMERGENCY COORDINATORS COMMISSION (RECC) BYLAW TO RECOGNIZE THE SERVICE**

PURPOSE

To consider establishing a new Regional Service for Emergency Program Support for the purpose of improving emergency preparedness on a regional level and to promote increased coordination and communication among local government programs.

BACKGROUND

In 2007, the CRD Board commissioned a report to look at how local governments in our region may best be able to respond to a wide-spread disaster in our region. The report "Disaster Coordination in the Capital Region" was completed in March of last year, and was then presented to elected officials and emergency coordinators from throughout the CRD. Response to the report varied, with some municipalities in support, while others raised significant concerns. Given the issues and questions raised as a result of the report's recommendations, staff implemented a process of one on one engagement of emergency coordinators throughout the region. The process was aimed at listening to each area's concerns to identify those components of the report that would be acceptable to all jurisdictions and build on the momentum of cooperation throughout the region.

From this process, staff has brought together a model which is inclusive of the ideas identified from throughout the region and achieves the strategic objective of the Board to improve collaboration among jurisdictions and improve area wide emergency preparedness. The Regional Service for Emergency Program Support will provide a system to bring together information and ideas, and provide that information and those ideas back to the programs for their use. It will become a central repository and clearinghouse for information on behalf of all the members. Additionally, it will create a venue for local government program coordinators to work on common initiatives such as training, multi-jurisdictional exercises and standards development and provide the opportunity to identify and resolve concerns and issues.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That a new Regional Service for Emergency Program Support for the Capital Regional District be established by Alternative Approval (entire area) and that the establishing bylaw and Advisory Commission Bylaw be introduced, given three readings and that amendments to the RECC Bylaw be brought forward with the establishment of the service.
2. That the Board refer the proposal back to staff and direct staff to work directly with member municipalities to explore other options.

PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

As a result of the consultation with local coordinators, a number of items were identified as being important to any proposal brought forward to the Board for this to add value to their local programs.

1. *Protection of local autonomy*

The Emergency Program Act mandates each individual local government to prepare an emergency plan, name an emergency coordinator and act as the local authority during a disaster. The powers and responsibilities provided to a local authority are there to allow local government to best support its residents in times of emergency. It is important to all coordinators that this foundation of local government involvement in emergencies and disasters be recognized and built upon.

2. *Individual development of local programs*

In each of the municipalities and electoral areas, a substantial effort has taken place over a number of years to develop local emergency programs. Each community has unique challenges, concerns and solutions, and these programs need to continue to develop in a way that supports their individuality.

3. *Input of all emergency coordinators in process development*

Coordinators indicated that it was important to have control over the process in the hands of all the local governments, and for it to be prepared with the input of all the local programs. The system of meeting with the community program representatives has allowed this proposal to be developed to fit the needs identified at the local program level.

4. *Role of the Province*

In our current model, all local governments communicate directly with the Province during a disaster through the Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC). This model works well in single jurisdictional events, but can become unmanageable during multi-jurisdictional events. In part this is due to lack of capacity by the Province to deal with what may be over 100 EOCs operating on Vancouver Island alone, and also partly due to the lack of local knowledge and resource information available to provincial staff, knowledge that local EOC staff may have. The programs need to work with the province to develop a system that allows for strong recognition of local knowledge and resources. The province has supported this model and has been part of the consultation for its development.

5. *Sharing of plans*

Development of a central library of emergency plans was key to ensuring all programs will work well with each other during an event and not unnecessarily compete for resources.

6. *Information/GIS*

Compiling information, including GIS data on a regional basis, will allow better access to resources during an event. Information made available on the Web, such as a training and exercise calendar will allow programs to benefit through cost sharing and cross training.

7. *Single point for contact list development*

Creating and updating one single contact list of responding and support agencies, made available to each local government will be more efficient than working individually.

8. *Media relations/protocols*

By looking at how media relations are handled by each program, we can start to look at how we can ensure a strong, consistent message may be made available to the public, both during an event, and also in our daily business of preparing residents on emergency management at home and at work. This includes how each local government can work with

each other, to present both a local voice to residents during a disaster, but also a message consistent with that of their neighbouring jurisdictions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding to initiate the development and implementation of the service has been provided by the Province, through Emergency Management BC in the amount of \$100,000.

Ongoing funding for the service is proposed to be provided through a reallocation of the requisition for Regional Hazmat Service in 2009. The Regional Hazmat Service has been able to acquire all necessary start up equipment and expenses and therefore is able to offset the requisition for this new service.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

A key focus of the proposed service is to retain the strength and autonomy of local programs and each local government as its own local authority. The service will provide a mechanism for increased capacity to deal with multi-jurisdictional events. It will also provide information that will be of benefit to individual programs in both planning and response.

As part of the consultation process the CRD Chair and staff met with the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to confirm support for this initiative and request the ongoing support from the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) to ensure this service will complement Provincial objectives and improve the functional capacity of the Provincial Regional Operations Centre (PREOC). Correspondence resulting from this meeting and follow-up meetings with the Associate Deputy Minister is attached.

Given the scope of the service, the two Alternative Methods for consent for the establishing bylaw were investigated. Given the intent to establish this service for the entire region and the support of the Province based on our inclusion of all communities, the Alternative Approval process for the entire area was selected. This option requires a resolution of the Board and approval of two-thirds of the Board.

REGIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE IMPLICATIONS

Each of the local governments within the region is mandated to have an emergency plan and act as a local authority for its area during an emergency event. Programs have been developed to provide support for responders and residents during localized disasters. The gap that has been identified is in the event of a multi-jurisdictional disaster. This proposed service will provide the building blocks for a strong coordinated response amongst local government. It is expected that representatives from the local emergency programs, meeting as the proposed advisory group will provide direction to the service and from that, a stronger capacity for regional response will evolve.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

In the Board's current Strategic Plan, Emergency and Disaster Response is listed as a priority with the description to develop an effective emergency and disaster response infrastructure throughout the CRD. This new service provides a strong framework to address that priority,

moving the CRD and the member municipalities and electoral areas forward as a leader in multi-jurisdictional emergency planning among local governments. By creating a centralized system for information sharing and resource management, we are providing all the basic tools needed to build a strong regional response in the event of a widespread disaster.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Planning and Protective Services Committee recommend to the Board:

1. That “Regional Service for Emergency Program Support Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 2008” be introduced, given first reading, given second reading and given third reading.
2. That “Regional Service for Emergency Program Support Advisory Commission Bylaw No. 1, 2008”, be introduced, given first reading, given second reading and given third reading.
3. That staff be directed to bring forward complementary amendments to the Regional Emergency Coordinators Commission in recognition of the new service.

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Concurrence

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COMMENTS: