

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

1100 Patricia Blvd. | Prince George, BC, Canada V2L 3V9 | www.princegeorge.ca

DATE: April 13, 2022

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: ADAM DAVEY, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY

SUBJECT: Emergency Preparedness Week and Emergency Program activities

ATTACHMENT(S): None

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Council RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION the report dated April 13, 2022, titled "Emergency Preparedness Week and Emergency Program Activities," from the Director of Public Safety.

PURPOSE:

The following report is to advise Mayor, Council and senior leadership of the activities of the Emergency Programs Division in the past year, planned activities for national Emergency Preparedness week (May 1-7, 2022), and the upcoming emergency season.

REPORT CONTENT:

1. Since 1996, Emergency Preparedness Week has been a federal-provincial-territorial initiative that occurs annually in the first week of May. The 2022 theme is "Be Ready for Anything" and Emergency Programs will continue to focus on messaging and presentations to support personal preparedness, and community emergency awareness. An additional focus will be to increase public knowledge of the types of events that occur in Prince George, and to promote the City's communication streams for emergency information.

Planned activities include increasing the availability of Emergency Program staff to provide presentations to Prince George community groups on the importance of household emergency plans, the contents of a 72 hour kit, and our local evacuation zones. Social media messaging will encourage residents to familiarize themselves with (or create) their household plans and kits (with printed materials available at the Service Centre).

2. The Emergency Programs Division is in the process of partnering with the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG) to sign on to their existing Public Notification System. This system will allow Prince George citizens to register to receive emergency event notices based on a geographic location which corresponds to the existing evacuation zones printed on the garbage collection calendar. If/when the system is activated, registered residents will receive text messages, emails and/or automated voice messages on landlines informing them of an emergency event in their area and instructions for either evacuation, or sheltering in place.

One of the key benefits of Prince George joining into the RDEFG's Public Notification System will provide consistency for residents who sign on to a single notification system and select to receive alerts.

This system will only be used when an area of the City is under a State of Local Emergency, or if there is an Evacuation Alert or Order in place, and is complementary to the Province's notification system which sends messaging to cell phones when there is an immediate threat to life.

3. The Emergency Programs Divisions activated Emergency Support Services for a total of 12 unique events during the 2021 calendar year. These included apartment/multi-unit residential fires, single house fires, and response to the provincial wildfire and flooding/atmospheric river events. Prince George ESS was activated for a total of 76 days in 2021 and supported a total of 184 evacuees from 14 different communities. In addition, portions of the City's EOC were activated at various points during 2021 for freshet, COVID, and seasonal Ice Jam monitoring,

Emergency Programs staff are currently working on plans for the 2022 summer season, including alternate primary Reception Centre locations for use during the BC Summer Games and other large events; planning for "host city" events, which may see Prince George host evacuees from other communities; and internal training.

4. Each year during the spring and summer there is significant potential for naturally occurring emergency events, which require regular monitoring and preparations by the Emergency Programs Division.

- Flooding resulting from the Spring Freshet is an annual concern in some areas of Prince George; however, mitigation and effective community planning has made Prince George quite resilient to flooding. This risk is generally limited to a small number of low lying neighborhoods and established plans are in place for monitoring, public notification, deployment of sandbags, and/or evacuation if the needs arises.

The April 1st reporting from the BC River Forecast Centre, current snow pack are considered as slightly above normal (117%) in watersheds in our locality, with the average of all snow measurements for the Fraser River basin at 102% . Typically 95% of the annual snowpack has accumulated by early March. Weather conditions will play a critical role in the rate of snowmelt, and is difficult to predict spring freshet with accuracy; however, it is noted that this year's snow index is lower than both 2020, and 2021.

Environment Canada has given indications that El Nina conditions will continue through the summer, giving a general outlook for the spring to include cooler and wetter temperatures, and possible late season snow accumulations.

Emergency Programs staff will continue to regularly monitor river levels and temperature forecasts; however, we do not anticipate any significant flooding unless heavy rains, excessive heat or a pattern of rain on snow events occur.

- Forest fires in the region are an annual summer concern, and the Emergency Programs Division relies on drought code and weather predictions to determine likelihood of wildfire events in our region. Provincial drought reporting does not begin until May 2022 and staff will be regularly monitoring conditions throughout the summer season.

As indicated previously, current weather forecasting indicates that a wetter but slightly cooler than average summer may occur. While this bodes well for the coming fire season,

there is no accurate prediction tool to determine wildfire activity, and even in wet seasons wildfire activity can be severe if the drought code is high.

BC Wildfire Service will continue to station both Initial Attack crews and Unit crews out of Prince George for the 2022 Wildfire season, and maintains a significant contingent of fixed wing fire suppression aircraft out of the Prince George Airport.

PREPARED BY: Tanya Spooner, Manager of Emergency Programs, Fire & Rescue Services

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Adam Davey, Director of Public Safety/
Acting City Manager

Meeting date: April 25, 2022