

# STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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**DATE:** September 27, 2019

**TO:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**NAME AND TITLE:** Dave Dyer, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works

**SUBJECT:** Union of BC Municipalities Community Resiliency Investment Grant Application for Prince George Wildfire Mitigation Actions 2020

**ATTACHMENT(S):** 1. Presentation – Wildfire Action Plan Update 2019

## RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council:

1. APPROVE that Administration complete the application process for a grant under the *Community Resiliency Investment Program – 2020 FireSmart Communities Funding & Supports*, which is administered by the Union of BC Municipalities, to complete wildfire fuel removal activities.
2. AUTHORIZE the City's Financial Officer and General Manager of Engineering and Public Works to sign grant application documents and any contract documents should grant approval be received.

## PURPOSE:

This report is presented to request City Council's authorization for completing an application under the *Community Resiliency Investment Program – 2020 FireSmart Communities Funding & Supports*. The grant will fund implementation of the next steps in wildfire mitigation, which include wildfire fuel removal activities.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

These wildfire mitigation actions address the goals of the 2019 Work Plan to provide a safe environment and, under the Key Corporate Strategies, to implement best practices related to health and safety. Reducing wildfire risk also aligns with the myPG goal of Adapting to Climate Change.

## BACKGROUND:

The City of Prince George has a history of proactively managing wildfire risk through both policy and operations. In 2005, the City developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), and over the next 7 years took advantage of Provincial funding to treat high risk fuel areas within the City's interface. In 2009 the City undertook a Landscape Scale Fire Behaviour Modeling study using models to evaluate fire behaviour and spread in fuels adjacent to the City under specified weather conditions.

Since the original CWPP was developed, there has been significant development growth in the urban wildland interface and forest health factors, including the mountain pine beetle and Douglas-fir bark beetle, have increased wildfire fuel hazards in the surrounding forest. Also, there is a better understanding of the expected impacts of climate change on wildfire risk including longer fire seasons and more intense fires.

As vegetation grows back from previous wild fire treatment works, it is recommended that wildfire risk be re-evaluated approximately every 5 years.

In October of 2017, Administration provided a report to Council requesting Council's approval to complete a grant application under the *Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative – Community Wildfire Protection Plans & Updates*. This request was approved, grant funding was secured and the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was updated. The CWPP was completed in the first quarter of 2019 and is awaiting final approval of the spatial data by the Provincial government. The final report was presented to Council in April 2019.

In November of 2018, Administration provided a report to Council to request Council approval to apply for grant funding under the *Community Resiliency Investment Program – 2019 FireSmart Communities Funding & Supports*. This request was also approved and grant funding was secured from UBCM for next steps in wildfire mitigation, including community education and planning for initiating wildfire fuel treatment activities, in the form of prescriptions. This funding is shared with the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George who is managing the FireSmart community education program and FireSmart activities on private land. The City's component of this grant funding included \$25,000 for emergency planning activities and \$77,300 for the development of fuel management prescriptions in six priority areas. This work is currently ongoing and public information sessions will be held on October 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

There is additional grant funding now available under the *Community Resiliency Investment Program – 2020 FireSmart Communities Funding & Supports*. The application deadline for this is October 18, 2019 and, if successful, would provide funding for wildfire fuel removal activities in three of the priority areas identified in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The wildfire fuel removal activities would occur in 2020.

Applications will be evaluated and an announcement of the successful projects by UBCM will follow in early 2020. Successful applicants will have one year from the time of approval to complete their projects.

There are three phases involved in the current wildfire mitigation work which has been dependent on grant funding from UBCM:

1. Phase 1 - Updated Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) which identified areas of wildfire risk from a desktop analysis. This work is complete.
2. Phase 2 – Development of prescriptions for areas identified in the CWPP within municipal boundaries to determine specifically where fuels need to be removed to reduce wildfire risk. This work is in progress.
3. Phase 3 – Wildfire fuel removal activities as per the prescriptions developed in Phase 2.

The City of Prince George will be putting in an application to implement Phase 3: Wildfire Fuel Removal Activities as prescribed in Phase 2.

If successful, City staff will prepare a Request for Proposals to complete the wildfire fuel removal activities for City of Prince George land. It is desired to proceed to procurement as soon as the grant application is approved to ensure fuel removal activities occur during appropriate environmental timing windows.

Further mitigation and education actions are expected to continue beyond 2020 and there appears to be strong support at the Provincial Government level to maintain the *Community Resiliency Investment Program* into the future. The plan is to apply again for 2021 grant funding to complete wildfire fuel removal activities in the remaining priority areas.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

The *Community Resiliency Investment* grant program will fund up to 100% of eligible costs for approved projects on municipal lands in high risk communities to a maximum of \$150,000 per year per community. Additional funding is available for fuel removal activities on Provincial Crown land from the *Forest Enhancement Society of British Columbia*.

The following summarizes the project costs:

Priority Area	Funding Request
Broddy (area surrounding the Vanway transfer station)	\$121,833
Malaspina (adjacent to the Creekside and Malaspina Ridge areas)	\$110,742
Pidherny	\$418,750

The total cost for this project is estimated at \$651,325. The City of Prince George will be requesting \$150,000 from the *UBCM Community Resiliency Investment* grant program and \$418,750 from the *Forest Enhancement Society of British Columbia*.

The balance of costs will be funded from an internal reserve dedicated for urban forestry management on City lands.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

Administration requests Council’s approval to complete the grant application process under the *UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Program – 2020 FireSmart Communities Funding & Supports*. If successful, the grant would cover wildfire fuel removal activities within three areas that have been identified as posing wildfire risk and are the highest priority for fuel removal.

If approved, the grant could fund up to \$150,000 towards wildfire fuel removal activities on municipal land and \$418,750 towards wildfire fuel removal activities on crown land.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**



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Dave Dyer, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works

Report prepared by: Andrea Byrne, Acting Supervisor Energy, Environment and Sustainability

**APPROVED:**



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Kathleen Soltis, City Manager  
Meeting date: October 7, 2019