

Date: August 29, 2024

To: **Mayor and Council**

Name and title: Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

Subject: Union of BC Municipalities Community Resiliency Investment Grant Application for Prince George Wildfire Mitigation Actions 2024

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation(s):

1. That Council APPROVES that Administration complete the application process for grant funding under the Community Resiliency Investment Program – 2024 FireSmart Community Funding & Supports, which is administered by the Union of BC Municipalities, to complete FireSmart activities and a Fuel Management Plan; and AUTHORIZES the City’s Financial Officer and Director of Planning and Development to sign grant application documents and any contract documents should grant approval be received.
2. That Council APPROVES expenditures of \$18,000 from the City’s Climate Action Reserve Fund to fund the remainder of fire resiliency activities above the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Grant maximum as described in the report dated August 29, 2024 from the Director of Planning and Development titled “Union of BC Municipalities Community Resiliency Investment Grant Application for Prince George Wildfire Mitigation Actions 2024”.

Purpose:

This report is presented to request City Council’s authorization for completing an application under the Community Resiliency Investment Program – 2024 FireSmart Community Funding & Supports. The grant will fund a Fuel Management Prescription (FMP) near Shane Lake and various FireSmart activities, including: part of a Structural Protection Unit (SPU), a new Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP), public education, staff training, and a dedicated FireSmart position.

Background:

The City of Prince George has a history of proactively managing wildfire risk through policy and operations. The City first developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in 2005 and worked to complete CWPP recommendations for the next 7 years.

An updated CWPP was completed in 2018, to account for an increase in developed area and a change in environmental conditions (Pine Beetle, Douglas Fir Beetle, warmer temperatures, drier summers,

etc). The updated CWPP provided a number of recommendations to mitigate wildfire risk throughout the City. These recommendations were prioritized based on their relative impact for reducing wildfire risk and the speed at which they could be implemented. The activities included in this grant application will execute four of the top five recommendations included in the CWPP, along with numerous lower priority recommendations.

Funding

The Community Resiliency Investment grant program is administered through UBCM and provides funding to local governments for a variety of FireSmart initiatives. These initiatives increase community resiliency and reduce wildfire risk.

The Local Government Climate Action Program (LGCAP) is a provincial program that provides annual funding to participating municipalities for completing climate related initiatives, such as FireSmart activities and fuel mitigation. This replaced the former Climate Action Revenue Incentive Program (CARIP), although unallocated funds from both are in the Climate Action Reserve Fund.

Strategic Priorities:

FireSmart activities and fuel mitigation align with various strategic plans of the City of Prince George. Please see the following list:

- **myPG Communities Goals and Priorities:** Adapting to Climate Change
- **2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan:** Environmental Stewardship and Climate Action Priorities
- **Climate Forward Implementation Strategy:**
 - Apply wildfire prescriptions to at risk areas to remove wildfire fuel.
 - Apply for grants to improve knowledge of FireSmart practices for City staff to protect existing infrastructure (i.e. parks, utilities, buildings).

Policy / Regulatory Analysis:

Once fuel mitigation activities are complete at Broddy Road, new FMPs will need to be developed to initiate additional fuel mitigation projects. Working jointly on fuel mitigation with the Province and UNBC has been highlighted as priority, both of which have parcels directly adjacent to Shane Lake. Development of an FMP in this area would enable effective coordination and planning for a potential joint project with the Province and UNBC.

Completion of fuel mitigation treatments on City owned lands is only a part of safeguarding the community from wildfire. The FireSmart program is an effective way of limiting fire risk on private property. Hiring a FireSmart Coordinator, additional staff training and the organization of educational events will help to effectively FireSmart more properties in the City. Further protection for key infrastructure would be added by an SPU, although this application will only cover the first of four phases to purchase a complete SPU.

Should council approve this funding allocation, work would commence immediately and all requirements of the grant application would be completed by September 30, 2025.

Sufficient funding is available through LGCAP to cover these activities, while continuing to support other City climate related initiatives.

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 \$200,000 per year per community.

The proposed FireSmart activities and development of an FMP also align with the objectives of City climate adaptation strategies and the requirements of LGCAP. This funding can be utilized to partially or fully fund climate related initiatives and requires a yearly summary outlining funding allocation. If approved this project would be summarized in the 2024 and 2025 reporting for LGCAP.

Total project cost will be \$218,000, of which \$200,000 will be covered by Community Resiliency Investment grant funding. The balance of costs will be funded from the Climate Action Reserve Fund, which holds LGCAP funds for climate related initiatives.

Summary and Conclusion:

Administration requests Council's approval to complete the grant application process under the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Program – 2024 FireSmart Communities Funding & Supports, and recommends that Council approve the use of \$18,000 of LGCAP funding from the Climate Action Reserve Fund account to fund the costs in excess of the CRI grant maximum.

If successful, these activities would help to safeguard against wildfire and reach City climate adaptation goals.

Respectfully Submitted:

Deanna Wasnik, Director, Planning and Development

Prepared by: Jesse Labatiuk, Environmental Specialist

Approved:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2024/09/25