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REPORT TO ELECTORAL AREAS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024

SUBJECT **Community Resiliency Initiative Grant: 2024 FireSmart Community Funding & Supports**

ISSUE SUMMARY

The Capital Regional District (CRD) assists Electoral Area (EA) communities in reducing their wildfire risk through first responder coordination, public education, emergency planning, and agency cross-training. The CRD is applying to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for funding to increase EA community wildfire resiliency activities (Appendix A). UBCM requires that all grant applications be accompanied by a motion of support from the local government.

BACKGROUND

UBCM provides funding for a range of community-based projects, including wildfire preparedness. A 2024 grant opportunity is available to support local governments as they build local capacity. The FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program supports activities that reduce community risk from wildfire. As part of the application process, UBCM requires a motion of support to receive and manage grant funding.

Protective Services staff have engaged with EA fire departments, emergency programs, local FireSmart committees, and community stakeholders to inform this grant application. Effective wildfire preparedness programs include seven FireSmart disciplines: education, vegetation management, legislation and planning, development considerations, interagency cooperation, cross-training, and emergency planning.

The CRD has applied for this grant to improve wildfire resiliency in rural EA communities through:

- a FireSmart public education campaign,
- an expanded wood chipping program that provides accessible alternatives to burning,
- a home FireSmart assessment program conducted by local qualified assessors,
- a FireSmart rebate program for residents, and
- dedicated wildfire training for first responders.

If the proposal is approved by UBCM, most grant funding would flow to local volunteers, firefighters and residents. The grant supports payments to community volunteers and contract positions such as the CRD FireSmart Coordinator. Funds would be distributed roughly evenly between EAs and spent over the coming year. Due to the elevated risk of wildfire, the Regional District is eligible for \$200,000 in base funding and each EA is eligible for an additional \$50,000. It is the intention of the CRD Protective Services team to apply for the maximum in each category for an approximate total of \$350,000.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the Capital Regional District Board support an application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Community Resiliency Initiative Fund for the 2024 FireSmart Community Funding and Supports. Staff are directed to apply for, negotiate, and if successful, enter into an agreement, and do all such things necessary for accepting grant funds and overseeing grant management for the proposed projects.

Alternative 2

That staff be directed to not submit the grant application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Community Resiliency Initiative FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

Emergency planning and training activity funded by this grant would enhance the CRD's ability to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from an environmental or climate related disaster.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

Capacity generated by this grant is aligned with existing emergency preparedness and strategies.

Financial Implications

The grant funding will have no impact on annual core CRD fire department or emergency program service budgets and the requisition revenue. But if the grant application is successful, the additional funding will provide an opportunity for additional projects that increase community resilience to wildfire, such as homeowner education and wood chipping events.

Intergovernmental Implications

A portion of this grant application is ear-marked to support the Island Trust's effort to establish a Development Permit Area. This cross-jurisdiction collaboration supports intergovernmental alignment and coordination.

Service Delivery Implications

Additional capacity funded through this grant would enhance service support capability to the CRD during an emergency or disaster.

CONCLUSION

The CRD supports community wildfire preparedness in its EAs. The UBCM FireSmart Community Funding & Supports funding stream is an important resource to build wildfire resilience in the capital region. If supported by the Board, UBCM will consider the CRD's grant application.

RECOMMENDATION

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the Capital Regional District Board support an application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Community Resiliency Initiative Fund for the 2024 FireSmart Community Funding and Supports. Staff are directed to apply for, negotiate, and if successful, enter into an agreement, and do all such things necessary for accepting grant funds and overseeing grant management for the proposed projects.

Submitted by:	Shawn Carby, CD, BHSc, MAL, Senior Manager, Protective Services
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Concurrence:	Nelson Chan, MBA, FCPA, FCMA, Chief Financial Officer
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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: 2024 FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Grant Application