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## REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2024

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**SUBJECT** Wildfire Resilient Futures Initiative Grant Application

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is applying for a one-time federal grant opportunity to increase wildfire resiliency in the capital region. Natural Resources Canada's Wildfire Resilient Futures Initiative (WRFI) includes a competitive multi-year grant opportunity. If approved, this proposal would provide support for multi-jurisdictional collaboration on wildfire mitigation initiatives across the capital region.

### **BACKGROUND**

Natural Resource Canada's WRFI program supports activities to transform the way Canada manages wildland fire, recognizing that we need to take proactive steps to prepare for wildfires and to reduce risks before they occur. This initiative is designed to mobilize and bring together all orders of government, Indigenous peoples, public and private sectors, academia and individuals to participate and coordinate efforts to effectively live safely within wildland fire prone areas. This one-time federal grant opportunity accepted applications for just six weeks, closing in mid-May 2024.

Wildfire risk governance in the capital region is shared between First Nations, municipalities, electoral areas, Islands Trust councils, parks and protected areas, and several provincial and federal agencies. The region encompasses an extensive wildland urban interface, a range of fire-dependent ecosystems, and a long history of indigenous fire use. The current patchwork of jurisdictions can present practical barriers to cross-jurisdictional wildfire risk mitigation projects.

The proposed initiative would develop a framework for voluntary coordination between governing bodies on knowledge and resource sharing, capacity building, and risk mitigation strategies that braid Indigenous and Western landscape management approaches. If selected for funding, the CRD would facilitate workshops, place-based meetings, projects, and cross-jurisdictional training to increase the region's capacity for wildfire mitigation and response. The intention is to facilitate landscape-level wildfire mitigation approaches, such as vegetation treatments, cultural burning, and a regional wildfire table.

Given the highly competitive grant process, staff would begin planning, resourcing, and engagement activities if notified of conditional approval by Natural Resources Canada. This may occur as early as August 2024. The end date for grant funded activities is May 2028.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### *Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies*

The activities in this grant application are supported by the CRD Electoral Area Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans, which contain several recommendations on regional cooperation, vegetation treatment, and prescribed burning.

*Financial Implications*

No changes to requisition, staffing, or existing budgets are anticipated as a result of this grant application. The requested grant funding totals \$369,500 over four calendar years, or \$92,375 per year. Incremental staff and contract costs would be funded through the grant.

*First Nations Reconciliation*

First Nations used fire to steward the landscapes of the capital region for thousands of years. This initiative envisions a framework for First Nations to further their interests in land management on their traditional territories, including in the restoration of cultural fire practices.

*Intergovernmental Implications*

Wildfire risk governance in the capital region is shared between 13 municipalities, six Islands Trust Councils, three Electoral Areas, parks and protected areas, provincial and federal agencies, and 18 First Nations. This grant application would create a forum for voluntary coordination between governing bodies in resource sharing, capacity building, and multi-jurisdictional public safety projects.

**CONCLUSION**

Natural Resources Canada's WRFI is offering a competitive multi-year grant opportunity that could support wildfire resilience in the capital region. If selected by the granting body, this proposal would support multi-jurisdictional collaboration on landscape-level wildfire mitigation initiatives such as vegetation management and cultural burning.

**RECOMMENDATION**

There is no recommendation. This report is provided for information only.

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