

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2020**

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**SUBJECT**     Victoria Plaza Hotel – Debris Disposal

**ISSUE SUMMARY**

To inform the committee of the impacts on Hartland Landfill airspace from the disposal of the Victoria Plaza Hotel fire debris.

**BACKGROUND**

On May 6, 2019, the derelict Victoria Plaza Hotel, located at the corner of Pandora and Government Streets, erupted in fire, largely destroying the approximately 100-year-old, four-storey structure. The remnants of the 16,000 square foot building could not be saved and were subsequently demolished. Given that the hotel was known to contain asbestos and that all of the debris had ended up being mixed as part of the effort to put out the fire, all of the debris needed to be managed on the assumption that it contained asbestos as a precaution to ensure worker safety. Accordingly, all of the debris was delivered to Hartland Landfill as asbestos-containing waste and landfilled in controlled waste trenches.

Although the fire had consumed a significant portion of the structure, a large amount of debris remained and a total of 186 truckloads of waste, totalling over 1,400 tonnes, were received at Hartland for disposal. The landfill air space consumed by the debris represents about 40% of all the controlled waste air space typically consumed over an entire year and highlights the potential an earthquake or other natural disaster has to consume a large amount of landfill space.

For comparison, the magnitude 6.3 earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2011 resulted in hundreds of buildings either collapsing or requiring immediate demolition. This generated approximately 1 to 1.5 million tonnes of debris by one estimate, while another estimate indicated that an earthquake will ultimately produce 4 million tonnes of debris once all condemned structures are finally demolished. A goal of 50% debris recycling was set for the main debris management facility, with the understanding that additional recycling of materials such as metals was/is being conducted at the demolition sites directly. One estimate indicated that the debris will equate to 20 years' worth of municipal solid waste from the city. A similar seismic event in the capital region could be expected to generate a comparable amount of damage and debris.

Authority for disaster debris management in BC rests with municipalities and not regional districts. The municipality with the biggest potential for significant disaster debris in a seismic event is the City of Victoria due to the large number of non-reinforced masonry buildings in the downtown core. It is understood that City staff are developing a disaster debris management plan that will include options to minimize the amount of solid waste being sent to the landfill. City staff expect to be conducting an engagement process on a draft plan that will include Capital Regional District (CRD) staff early in 2020.

In Metro Vancouver, a regional approach to disaster debris management (DDM) was coordinated by the Integrated Partnership for Regional Emergency Management (IPREM). This is an

intergovernmental partnership between the Province of BC and Metro Vancouver (21 municipalities, one Treaty First Nation and one Electoral Area). IPREM was formed to coordinate regional emergency management planning activities. The Joint Municipal Regional Disaster Debris Management Operational Plan (2017) provides a framework for disaster debris management for the Metro Vancouver region. This Plan enables Local Authorities to collaborate and coordinate effort, DDM resources and communications to maintain continuity and recover from emergencies.

The Capital Region has a similar agreement with Emergency Management BC, the Regional Emergency Management Partnership (REMP), with the same objective to improve the coordination of emergency planning activities across the region. Disaster debris management falls under this as a potential regional emergency planning initiative and has been identified by our regional partners as an important project that REMP should consider for inclusion in future work planning.

**CONCLUSION**

In May 2019, the Victoria Plaza Hotel erupted in fire, largely destroying the building and the debris from the fire and building demolition totalled some 186 truckloads of material that were sent to Hartland Landfill for disposal as asbestos-containing waste. This clean-up highlighted the potential an earthquake or other natural disaster has to consume a large amount of landfill space. In this region, the City of Victoria is most at risk for having a large amount of disaster debris in a seismic event and its staff are preparing a disaster debris management plan that is expected to be finalized later this year. Additional disaster debris management planning at the regional level could be coordinated by REMP to establish a plan similar to that developed by IPREM in Metro Vancouver.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That this report be received for information.

Submitted by:	Tom Watkins, Acting Senior Manager, Environmental Resource Management
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P. Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer