



PRESENTED: October 6, 2020 **REPORT:** 20-100
FROM: Corporate and Community Services **FILE:** 8337.02
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY RESILIENCY INVESTMENT PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Corporate and Community Services be endorsed.

That Council endorse the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' Community Resiliency Investment Program grant application and, if successful, direct staff to provide overall grant management as per Union of British Columbia Municipalities' grant requirements.

Appendix “A” – Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program and Application Guide

The purpose of this Report is to obtain Council's endorsement for the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' (UBCM) Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program grant application. For the RMOW to be eligible for UBCM grant funding, a Council Resolution indicating support for the grant application and direction to provide overall grant management is required to be submitted with the application.

The Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program is a provincial program intended to reduce the risk and impact of wildfire to communities in BC through community funding, supports and priority fuel management activities.

The program is structured to fund FireSmart and wildfire fuel management activities in all eligible communities throughout BC. Funding is scaled such that communities with lower risk of wildfire are able to apply for up to \$25,000, and applicant communities with a demonstrated higher risk of wildfire are able to apply for up to \$150,000 per year. Applications that include fuel management on Provincial Crown land, primarily within administrative boundaries and including contiguous, logical treatment units that extend onto the Crown land base, may exceed the funding maximum for fuel management activities only. Whistler is classified as wildfire risk class one with approximately \$16 billion (bcassessment.ca) in assets located within two km of identified wildfire risks. Additionally, with over three million visitors annually, the community is exposed to greater likelihood of human caused ignitions.

In the draft 2021 Five Year Financial Plan, Council will consider approximately \$400,000 in annual funding for FireSmart programming in Whistler. To assist with funding these investments, the RMOW is applying for \$100,000 from the UBCM 2021 CRI Program in order to support the FireSmart Program. The RMOW will also apply for \$50,000 to supplement wildfire fuel management as part of the RMOW Wildfire Program 2019 – 2027. This latter portion is focused on treating the Wildland Urban Interface areas developed by B.A. Blackwell & Associates Ltd. as presented to Council at the Committee of the Whole Meeting on September 17, 2019. Total grant application amount is \$150,000.

The Whistler FireSmart Program engages the community to educate, motivate, guide and support FireSmart activities intended to reduce the potential impact of wildfire in the municipality. Building a strong understanding and appreciation of local wildfire threat and advocating FireSmart solutions are cornerstone to these efforts. Program activities include FireSmart outreach and presentations, conducting FireSmart assessments, organizing and leading FireSmart work days with homeowners, organizing and leading volunteer groups in the Adopt-a-Trail campaign (treating forest around the valley trail system), as well as deploying FireSmart crews to deliver regular community chipper service and reducing fuel load in dense juvenile municipal forest. Collectively, these activities are the key components designed to progressively move the community toward greater wildfire resilience.

The potential grant funds assigned to the forest thinning wildfire fuel management will assist with treating approximately 30 hectares of wildland urban interface area as per the RMOW Wildfire Program 2019-2027.

If supported by Council, the grant application will be submitted prior to October 9, 2020.

OTHER POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

FireSmart fuel management on private lands will continue to complement the ongoing work and Municipal wildfire protection expenditures on Provincial Crown lands within the Municipality. These actions are consistent with the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Community Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), and the updated Official Community Plan.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

If successful, the UBCM CRI program will provide the funds to support the continued work program of the FireSmart Supervisor and crew. This team provides a well-coordinated, high quality FireSmart program in Whistler designed to help homeowners enhance wildfire safety within their neighbourhoods and become an important part of the overall wildfire preparedness of the RMOW.

If successful, the UBCM CRI program will also provide funds to support the municipally-led treatment of approximately 30 hectares in the wildland urban interface area as part of the RMOW Wildfire Program 2019-2027 developed by B.A. Blackwell & Associates Ltd. and to update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Ongoing community engagement is led by the FireSmart Supervisor. The FireSmart Supervisor will continue to work closely with homeowners through program delivery and will provide information to Whistler residents on how to FireSmart their property, assist them with understanding options, prioritizing work, fuel removal, engaging arborists, and connecting with Parks or other land managers, as needed.

The forest thinning fuel management treatments on crown land, overseen by the Environmental Stewardship Manager, will be communicated to the public through information such as newspapers, and through social media.

SUMMARY

FireSmart and wildfire fuel management investments are key components of wildfire risk reduction for the community. Supporting ongoing programs of fuel reduction in strategic locations located on both Provincial Crown and private lands is important and should continue. As such, the purpose of this report is to obtain Council's endorsement for the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program grant application.

Respectfully submitted,

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for
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for
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