



COUNCIL REPORT

To: Mayor and Council

Date: February 14, 2023

From: Paul Gipps, CAO

Subject: **SILGA Resolution – FireSmart and Wildfire Mitigation Funding**

Report Prepared by: Jason Brolund, Fire Chief

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council consider and resolve to endorse the proposed resolution contained within this report; and

THAT Council consider and resolve to direct staff to forward the endorsed recommendation for consideration and endorsement by the Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA).

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Foster Safety and Well-Being – We will pursue through direct action, advocacy, and partnerships with Westbank First Nation and local service providers, investments in community health, needs-based housing, emergency preparedness, policing, and other services that foster safety and well-being in West Kelowna.

BACKGROUND

Members of the Union of BC Municipalities are asked to submit resolutions to area associations for consideration at their annual spring meetings. The deadline for submission is February 24, 2023; and if endorsed, the resolutions are submitted automatically to UBCM for consideration at the annual meeting.

DISCUSSION

At the December 13, 2022 Council meeting, during the FireSmart and Wildfire Mitigation Council Update, staff identified challenges with the existing UBCM Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) grant process. These challenges include:

- Ongoing need for additional grant funds to continue FireSmart / Wildfire Mitigation.

- Onerous, resource intensive process for the application, administration, and financial recovery of grants for wildfire mitigation.
- Current grant process is annual, and competition based, not allowing for a secure source of ongoing funding and long-term certainty for planning.
- A transition is recommended to an allocation-based formula-based model that reflects the risks in communities and their ability to deliver sustainable, consistent, and successful mitigation programs. Communities would qualify once to secure ongoing funding under the program.

Staff were directed to bring forward a resolution for submission to SILGA (UBCM) to address these challenges and ensure sustainable funding for wildfire mitigation.

Proposed Resolution:

WHEREAS the Province of BC faces ongoing and increased risk of wildfire, with more aggressive fires, that grow larger and threaten more lives and property each year;

AND WHEREAS the Province spends hundreds of millions of dollars on wildfire suppression (\$263 million/year - 10-year average);

AND WHEREAS the amount dedicated to local governments for wildfire prevention via the Community Resilience Investment Grant is exponentially smaller (\$13 million in 2022);

AND WHEREAS the existing grant process is onerous and resource intensive, whereby local governments must apply every year and compete for limited dollars, and does not allow for long term planning;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM work with the Province of British Columbia to dedicate additional grant funds to wildfire prevention and further ease and simplify the program, changing the process from a competition-based application process to an allocation-based formula to reduce red tape, and allow for future planning and more effective prevention-based response.

REVIEWED BY

Sandy Webster, Director of Corporate Initiatives

Allen Fillion, Director of Engineering and Operations

Corinne Boback, Legislative Services Manager / Corporate Officer

Mark Roberts, Parks Manager

Jason Luciw, Customer Service Supervisor

Bryce Stirling, FireSmart and Wildfire Mitigation Coordinator

APPROVED FOR THE AGENDA BY

Paul Gipps, CAO

Powerpoint: Yes ☐ No ☒