



## COUNCIL REPORT

To: Mayor and Council

Date: April 23, 2024

From: Ron Mattiussi, Interim CAO

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

Report Prepared by: Jason Brolund, Fire Chief

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**RECOMMENDATION** to Consider and Resolve:

**THAT** Council endorse the proposed resolution contained within the report from the Fire Chief dated April 23, 2024;

**AND THAT** Council 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 collaboration with local and regional 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 (SILGA) for consideration at their annual spring meetings. If endorsed, the resolutions are submitted automatically to UBCM for consideration at the annual meeting.

In 2023 a SILGA and UBCM resolution was submitted and endorsed (see attached).

### **DISCUSSION**

In late 2023, the CRI grant program was improved. In response to advocacy from CWK and other jurisdictions (including our successful SILGA and UBCM resolutions) the following improvements were announced:

1. Funding for FireSmart activities moved to an “allocation based” model. This move reduced red tape for activities not related to FTE’s or prescriptions and mitigation works. (September 2023)
2. Allowance of \$100,000 to exceed the base funding maximum to support incremental FireSmart Activities due to increased local demand for wildfire risk reduction in communities that we impacted by wildfires. (November 2023)
3. A two year term was announced.

However, at the March 12, 2024 Council meeting, during the FireSmart and Wildfire Mitigation Council Update, staff identified **the need to get more done faster** and identified continuing challenges and areas for improvement with the existing UBCM Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) grant process. These include:

- Ongoing need for additional grant funds to continue FireSmart / Wildfire Mitigation.
- Wildfire Mitigation portions (prescriptions/treatments) of the program remain application based and remains an onerous, resource intensive process for the application, administration, and financial recovery of portions of the grant.
- While an improvement, the two year term is still a short period of time given the increasing frequency of major fire events. Timelines for approval of the grant are stated as 120 days from application – fully 25% of the annual cycle.
- A full transition to 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 for a longer period of time.

Staff were asked 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 continues to face devastating wildfire events year after year and the risk of these events continues to climb;

**AND WHEREAS** the Province spends hundreds of millions of dollars on wildfire suppression;

**AND WHEREAS** the amount dedicated to local governments for wildfire prevention via the Community Resilience Investment Grant is exponentially smaller;

**AND WHEREAS** In April 2024, the Premier’s Expert Task Force on Emergencies called the FireSmart program a “*success story*” but recommended “*building capacity to expedite wildfire risk reduction projects*” and “*streamline administrative requirements, and providing more year-over-year certainty for communities applying for FireSmart funding*”;

**AND WHEREAS** while improvements are being made, portions of the existing grant process is onerous and resource intensive, 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, fully changing the process from a competition-based application process to an allocation-based formula for a term of at least 5 years to reduce red tape, and allow for future planning and more effective prevention-based response.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that UBCM work with the Province of British Columbia to reduce the grant approval timelines to less than 30 days.

**REVIEWED BY**

Sandy Webster, Director of Corporate Initiatives

Warren Everton, Director of Finance / CFO

Corinne Boback, Legislative Services Manager / Corporate Officer

**APPROVED FOR THE AGENDA BY**

Trevor Seibel, Deputy CAO

PowerPoint: Yes  No

Attachments:

2023 SILGA/UBCM Resolution and Provincial Response

Premier's Expert Task on Emergencies Summary of Recommendations – April 2024