



Regional Board Report

Information

Approved for Board Consideration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Reardon".

Brian Reardon, CAO

To: Regional Board

From: Todd Cashin, Director of Community Services

Date: April 14, 2022

Subject: Regional Evacuation Planning Framework – Project Update

Voting Entitlement: *All Directors – Unweighted Corporate Vote – Simple Majority (LGA s.208)*

Purpose: To provide the Regional Board with an update on the Regional Evacuation Planning Framework.

Executive Summary:

The Regional District of Central Okanagan is vulnerable to an array of hazards which require effective emergency preparedness. The achievement of emergency preparedness takes place through a process which examines susceptibility to a full range of hazards, identifies human and material resources available to cope with these threats, and defines the organizational structures by which a coordinated response is made. The Regional Evacuation Planning Framework is one component in the preparedness process aimed at improving disaster and emergency resiliency within the RDCO.

Funded by a UBCM grant, the RDCO retained Amanda Newell of Sundog Solutions, who will provide an update on the Regional Evacuation Route Planning project and introduce the framework.

Recommendation:

THAT the Regional Board receives the Regional Evacuation Planning Framework – Project Update report from the Director of Community Services, dated April 14, 2022, for information.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Cashin".

Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

Prepared by: Brittany Nichols, Environmental Planner

Attachment(s):

- Regional Evacuation Planning Framework
- RDCO/Sundog Solutions Presentation April 14, 2022

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Priorities: Sustainable Communities

Values: Regional Perspective, Relationships, Collaboration, Resiliency

Background:

In recent years, the RDCO and partner municipalities have experienced significant hazard events requiring both small- and large-scale evacuations. Most recently, the summer of 2021 highlighted the wildfire risk that exists throughout the region as well the challenges associated with evacuating residential developments with limited access and egress.

Based on this context, the RDCO identified the need to develop a Regional Evacuation Planning Framework. This framework will complement the existing regional approach to emergency management and will provide additional guidance for planning and coordination through the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) of an evacuation or shelter-in-place response for any or all communities within the regional boundaries.

To achieve this, the RDCO was awarded a provincial grant offered by the UBCM and retained Sundog Solutions under contract to develop the Regional Evacuation Planning Framework. This initial phase will provide an overview of the main hazards throughout the region, identify neighbourhoods with the highest level of risk, and provide recommendations for future phases of the project.

Regional Evacuation Planning Framework

The purpose of this project is to improve evacuation route planning for high-risk communities, such as one-way in, one-way out communities, throughout the Central Okanagan to increase the overall safety and well-being of residents in the event of an emergency.

The objectives of Phase 1 of the Regional Evacuation Planning Framework are to:

- Identify high priority areas throughout the Regional District based on local hazard analysis;
- Provide hazard and access challenge data to populate the EOC Dashboard;
- Discuss mapping needs and options for templates that all member municipalities could access to enhance evacuation planning through a consistent approach; and,
- Participate in a Tabletop Exercise to address challenges and promote communication among stakeholders.

In collaboration with local fire departments, local and provincial government staff, and qualified professionals, the Evacuation Route Planning Framework will prioritize each area of interest being examined based on hazard and risk ratings (such as wildfire or flood). The overall goal of the project is to increase community resiliency and to improve emergency preparedness and response.

Steering Committee

This project was guided by a diverse and multi-jurisdiction steering committee, who has provided input at various key stages during the development of the Regional Evacuation Framework. Participants included staff from various local government departments (fire services, engineering, planning, forestry, GIS), non-government organizations, and First Nations communities. The participants included:

- Regional District of Central Okanagan
- Emergency Operations Centre
- Joe Rich Fire Department
- Ellison Fire Department
- North Westside Fire Department
- Wilsons Landing Fire Department
- Westbank First Nation
- Ntityix Resources LP
- Okanagan Indian Band
- City of Kelowna
- Kelowna Fire Department
- City of West Kelowna
- West Kelowna Fire Department
- District of Peachland
- Peachland Fire Department
- District of Lake Country
- BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- BC Wildfire Service
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Focus areas for Phase 1 were identified by the Steering Committee based on egress challenges and proximity to hazard risk. Additionally, a tabletop exercise was facilitated with the Steering Committee as a Capstone to Phase 1 of the Regional Evacuation Planning Framework. Twenty-two participants joined from across the region and were presented with a hazard and evacuation scenario that required discussion and collaboration to determine appropriate courses of action, multi-agency coordination and cooperation.

Summary and Next Steps

The RDCO's regional approach to emergency management illustrates the benefit of collaborating with regional partners and neighbouring First Nation communities to provide holistic emergency management solutions for all phases (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery). This Regional Evacuation Planning Framework aims to follow those principles established by the regional approach to ensure collaborative and inclusive planning that addresses the diverse needs of the region's residents.

Phase 1 of the project examined existing plans and processes, reviewed local hazards and hazard levels, identified areas with evacuation challenges, and developed an overarching regional framework to inform future phases of evacuation route planning. A number of recommendations were developed throughout Phase 1 to provide additional clarification on identified gaps and challenges and actions that can be taken to address them in the future. Work will need to be completed to prioritize the recommendations, identify timeframes, and specify organizations responsible and to assign roles.

Regional Growth Strategy:

The RDCO adopted Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Bylaw No. 1336 on June 23, 2014. A RGS is a long-range planning tool that assists local governments to plan a coordinated future for their communities while dealing with regional issues and decisions that cross local political boundaries. The RGS is also a collective vision from the regional partners for the future to create a region that promotes growth that is economically, environmentally, and socially healthy over a twenty (20) year time horizon. The following policies of the RGS support the initiative:

Our Land

- Encourage cooperation and information sharing with regional partners on hazard identification and mapping programs to provide better and more information on hazard management.
- Encourage cooperation and information sharing with regional partners to identify data and information necessary to improve hazard and resiliency planning.

Regional Emergency Plan:

The Regional District of Central Okanagan has an emergency plan in place. The RDCO Emergency Plan has been coordinated by the City of Kelowna Fire Department on behalf of the Regional District, the City of Kelowna, the City of West Kelowna, District of Lake Country, District of Peachland and Westbank First Nation. The plan makes provisions for the community in the event of any emergency such as flooding, forest fires, windstorms or other catastrophes that see people evacuated from their homes.

Emergency planning is a dynamic process. This Regional Evacuation Planning Framework is only one part of preparedness efforts that include training, exercises, and the debriefing of actual events. As the RDCO evolves, so will the Evacuation Route Framework and subsequent plans, which will be regularly reviewed and adapted. Due to the nature of major emergencies, there may be a need to adapt plans during an evacuation or shelter-in-place. Therefore, this Framework acts as the foundation for continuous planning efforts rather than a final, rigid solution.

Considerations:

Organizational/External: The Regional District is involved in the planning process though overall project management, contract management, collaboration with project partners, and other administrative functions.

Financial: The RDCO was awarded a \$25,000.00 grant from the UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund to support the completion of the project.

Considerations not applicable:

- Legal/Statutory Authority
 - Alternative Recommendation
-