
MEETING TYPE: Regular Council Meeting
MEETING DATE: Tuesday, September 20, 2022
AUTHOR: Darren Lee, Fire Chief
DEPARTMENT: Protective Services
ITEM TITLE: FireSmart Canada UBCM Grant Application
DESCRIPTION: An application to UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund

QUESTION

How does Council wish to address the opportunity to apply to the 2023 Intake of the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund - FireSmart Community Funding and Supports when it opens for applications October 1st, 2022?

OPTIONS

- A. THAT staff be directed to make an application to the 2023 UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund - FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Grant for an initial request of \$200,000 when applications open October 1st, 2022; AND THAT staff prepare a Community FireSmart Program proposal for Council's consideration during the 2023 Budget deliberations, pending results of the grant application.
- B. THAT staff not apply for the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund at this time, and prepare a Community FireSmart Program proposal for Council's consideration during the 2023 Budget deliberations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District of Lake Country (District) and the Lake Country Fire Department (LCFD) have experienced several Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) emergencies in the recent past. The 'Nighthawk Fire' is widely regarded as the WUI incident note for the District. On July 15th, 2017 this fire damaged and/or destroyed numerous homes in the Okanagan Centre neighborhood. The social and personal impacts of the Nighthawk Fire extend well beyond the incident and the homes lost. Over the past two decades, Staff and LCFD Firefighters have also been called to assist our partners in the Emergency Operations Centre and on Fireground. The frequency, complexity, and severity of WUI emergencies in British Columbia is trending upward and significant financial support for mitigation is now available from senior levels of government.

The WUI issue in the interior of British Columbia is a complicated problem with numerous casual factors that include but are not limited to:

- Over 80 years of successful modern wildfire suppression,
- Forest Health Issues,
- Climate Change, and
- Growing population base in the WUI.

To support Local Governments and First Nations throughout British Columbia, the Provincial Government created the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Fund in 2018. The CRI and its three separate funding streams are intended to reduce the risk of wildfires and mitigate their impacts on British Columbias communities. The Fund has expanded, and it now includes a wide range of eligible costs related to locally directed FireSmart programs and activities.

[Community Resiliency Investment | Union of BC Municipalities \(ubcm.ca\)](#)

The District is currently conducting several Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) projects. These current WRR projects have been funded through the CRI. WRR projects fall under Stream-2 of the CRI. Stream-2 is managed by the Ministry of Forests and is intended to be used for WRR on Crown Lands only. This funding stream is not to be used for mitigation efforts on private property.

The District is also conducting three FireSmart pilot projects in the community. These three FireSmart pilot projects were fully funded by the District through the 2022 Financial Plan. Stream-1 of the CRI is managed by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Staff have investigated the eligible costs under Stream-1 of the CRI and are seeking Councils approval to make an application to the UBCM FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program for an initial ask of \$200,000 to secure funding for a FireSmart Coordinator and associated costs.

The FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program provides funding to local governments and First Nations in BC to increase community resiliency by undertaking community-based FireSmart planning and activities that reduce the community's risk from wildfire.

[FireSmart Community Funding & Supports | Union of BC Municipalities \(ubcm.ca\)](#)

The timing of this Request for a Council Decision is based upon the 2023 intake for the FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program opening October 1st, 2022. UBCM Staff have indicated that applications take approximately 90 days to process. Fire Staff are working proactively, to ensure that the District's application is at the front of the queue when the UBCM begins processing 2023 applications. This timing will allow the District to make an application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and, bring a fully informed FireSmart Program proposal forward as part of the 2023 budget. Staff would likely seek early approval so that FireSmart Coordinator recruitment timelines would allow the proponent to join the District in advance of the 2023 wildfire season.

KEY INFORMATION

The history of FireSmart Canada goes back to 1990 when a multi-agency committee was established to address common concerns about wildfire in the wildland urban interface, where natural wildland environments and human development come together. The FireSmart Canada has evolved over the past 32-years program and today it helps protect residents, their homes, neighbourhoods, critical infrastructure, and vital natural resources from wildfire. FireSmart Canada sees this as a shared responsibility involving all levels of government with participation from the private sector and neighbourhood leaders. The FireSmart Canada Program utilizes seven disciplines to help neighbourhoods address the threat of wildfire. These are as follows:

- Education,
- Emergency Planning,
- Vegetation Management,
- Legislation,
- Development,
- Interagency Cooperation, and
- Cross Training.

[About FireSmart | FireSmart Canada](#)

Through the LCFD's 2022 annual training plan, several key staff members recently completed a 32-hour FireSmart Canada Home Partners Program – Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Course. This training helped Staff gain expertise in the seven disciplines with a specific focus on working with and from the community out into the natural wildland environment. The Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Course has also allowed Staff to network and gain insight into what programs and initiatives are making a positive impact regionally and provincially.

As was mentioned above, Staff have investigated the eligible costs under Stream-1 of the CRI and are seeking Councils approval to make application to the UBCM FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program for an initial ask of \$200,000 to secure funding for a FireSmart Coordinator and associated costs.

DESIRED BENEFIT

Based on their experience and, the experience of their colleagues in the industry, Staff are aware of the complexity of initiating and then managing a successful FireSmart Program. Securing funding for a FireSmart Coordinator position is a critical first step towards building a program that has a significant and lasting impact on wildfire resilience. Other communities in the region have not only secured funding for a FireSmart Coordinator, but they have also secured funding for FireSmart Specialists that work under the direction of coordinators. This has allowed other communities to allocated sufficient Staff time and resources towards ensuring that their programs are immediately impactful.

The most successful of these FireSmart Teams are making significant improvements in their community's resiliency to wildfire within two or three years. This rapid impact is achieved through a synergy of Staff time that is multiplied by the collective time and effort of the community at large. These successful FireSmart Teams are focusing on building relationships in their respective communities through considerable investments in their local schools. Working with students is intended to make sure that FireSmart Programs are effective in the short term and the long-term.

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Securing funding for and then creating an effective FireSmart Program for the District is aligned with all five of Councils 2022 Strategic Priorities.

- Infrastructure - Fire Smart can help improve protection specific critical infrastructure such as waste water facilities, drinking water facilities and other assets by creating defensible space in and around these facilities.
- Economy - Fire Smart can help make the local economy more resilient by making homes and businesses and more resilient by ensuring that they are prepared to withstand to the impacts of wildfire
- Governance – FireSmart will create opportunities to work with regional partners, provincial partners and it should also create an opportunity to work with First Nations as is the case with several WRR projects.
- Environment – FireSmart can help the residences and businesses within the District become more resilient to wildfire by adapting private properties to better live with current and future wildfire potential.
- Social – FireSmart will allow the District to better connect with individuals, groups and associations within the community.

FireSmart funding rules allow supported Staff time to amend policy and plans as they relate to mitigating the impacts of wildfire. The intent is to help local governments become more resilient to the threat of wildfire by mitigating current conditions while building the future mindful of the impacts of wildfire.

REQUISITES

All First Nations and Local Governments in British Columbia are eligible to apply UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund - FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Grant. Eligible applicants are allowed to submit one application per intake, including regional applications or participation as a partnering applicant in a regional application. In 2023, Base Funding Eligible applicants with a lower risk of wildfire, such as WUI Risk Class 4 and 5, can apply for 100% of the cost of eligible activities to a maximum of \$100,000 per application. Eligible applicants with a higher risk of wildfire, such as WUI Risk Class 1, 2 and 3, can apply for 100% of the cost of eligible activities to a maximum of \$200,000 per application. Staff have assessed the Districts WUI Risk Class using the available mapping referenced in the application. Based on analysis of this mapping data, Staff believe that the District should apply for the maximum of \$200,000 in the 2023 intake.

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES

If an application to the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund - FireSmart Community Funding and Supports is successful, the LCFD will have to provide office space for Staff, storage space for equipment and access to appropriate fleet vehicles. The LCFD can accommodate some additional Staff at Fire Station 71 in Winfield. Depending on the equipment and fleet requirements, space is available at Fire Station 71 in Winfield as well as Station 81 in Carr's Landing and Station 91 in Oyama. Some local governments have vehicles and equipment dedicated to FireSmart Teams operated by their fire department. Others are actively sharing specialized equipment between Parks Departments and Fire Departments. If the funding application is successful and Staff have Council's support to build a FireSmart Program all the operational details will evolve with the intent of maximizing community impact and available funding.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

As was referenced earlier, the history of FireSmart Canada goes back to 1990 when a multi-agency committee was established to address common concerns about wildfire in the wildland urban interface, where wildlands and human development come together. The FireSmart Canada has evolved over the past 32-years program and today it helps protect residents, their homes, neighbourhoods, critical infrastructure, and vital natural resources from wildfire. FireSmart Canada sees this as a shared responsibility involving all levels of government and participation from the private sector and neighbourhood leaders.

[About FireSmart | FireSmart Canada](#)

Through the LCFD's 2022 annual training plan, several key staff members recently completed a 32-hour FireSmart Canada Home Partners Program – Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Course. This training helped Staff gain expertise in the seven disciplines with a specific focus on working with and from the community out into the natural wildland environment. The Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Course has also allowed Staff to network and gain insight into what programs and initiatives are making a positive impact regionally and provincially.

[FireSmart Home Partners Program | FireSmart Canada](#)

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

If Council supports Option-A, Staff will be able to use the official Council Resolution to make application to the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund - FireSmart Community Funding and Supports for \$200,000. Other than the investment of Staff time there is no financial risk to the District at the application phase. The 90-day review process at UBCM will allow staff to build a FireSmart Program proposal for the 2023 Budget that is fully informed.

Based on consultation with other local government personnel, Staff have learned that some agencies are running FireSmart Programs that utilize a combination of local and provincial funding. Others are operating at a net zero impact to local funding and only spending UBCM grant funds. In all cases, it seems that FireSmart Teams make minor adaptations to the financial side to help ensure that the program has the best impact for their community or First Nation.

APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

As was referenced earlier, to support Local Governments and First Nations throughout British Columbia, the Provincial Government created the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Fund in 2018. The CRI and its three separate funding streams are intended to reduce the risk of wildfires and mitigate their impacts on communities and

First Nations within British Columbia. The Fund has expanded, and it now includes a wide range of eligible costs related to locally directed FireSmart programs and activities.

[Community Resiliency Investment | Union of BC Municipalities \(ubcm.ca\)](#)

Stream-1 of the CRI is managed by the UBCM. Staff have investigated the eligible costs under Stream-1 of the CRI and are seeking Councils approval to make an application to the UBCM FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program for an initial ask of \$200,000 to secure funding for a FireSmart Coordinator and associated costs.

The FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program provides funding to local governments and First Nations in BC to increase community resiliency by undertaking community-based FireSmart planning and activities that reduce the community's risk from wildfire.

[FireSmart Community Funding & Supports | Union of BC Municipalities \(ubcm.ca\)](#)

IMPACT ON INFRASTRUCTURE OR MUNICIPAL SERVICES

As was referenced earlier, if the application to the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund - FireSmart Community Funding and Supports is successful, the LCFD will have to provide office space for additional Staff. The LCFD may also have to find storage space for equipment and provide access to appropriate fleet vehicles. The LCFD can accommodate some additional Staff at Fire Station 71 in Winfield and has limited storage space at Fire Station 81 in Carr's Landing and Station 91 in Oyama.

A locally directed FireSmart Program would be an improvement to current service levels. In terms of the financial impact, the support in terms of UBCM funding is smart investment as the cost of fighting large scale wildland urban interface fire is much higher than the cost of mitigation,

IMPACT ON STAFF CAPACITY AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In terms of the impact on Staff Capacity, securing funding for a FireSmart Coordinator position is a critical first step towards building a program that has a significant and lasting impact on wildfire resilience. Other communities in the region have not only secured funding for a FireSmart Coordinator, but they have also secured funding for FireSmart Specialists that work under the direction of coordinators. This has allowed other communities to allocated sufficient Staff time and resources towards ensuring that their programs are immediately impactful.

In terms of Financial Resources, Stream-1 of the CRI is managed by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Staff have investigated the eligible costs under Stream-1 of the CRI and are seeking Councils approval to make an application to the UBCM FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program for an initial ask of \$200,000 to secure funding for a FireSmart Coordinator and associated costs.

COMMENTS FROM EXTERNAL AGENCIES, COMMITTEES AND STAKEHOLDERS

No official comment or correspondence pertinent to this report have been sent or received.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Staff have completed the FireSmart Canada Home Partners Program – Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Course. Staff have also consulted with partners at the UBCM, BC Wildfire Service, BC Office of the Fire Commissioner, and various municipal fire service agencies. Staff have researched applicable grants and were able identify that the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund - FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Grant is a fit for the District. Eligible applicants with WUI Risk Class 1, 2 and 3, can apply for 100% of the cost of eligible activities to a maximum of \$200,000 per application.

The UBCM applications form states:

Applicants are required to document engagement in the application. Planning and discussion must occur at a minimum of 30 days prior to submission of an application to allow for meaningful dialogue regarding the proposed FireSmart activities and opportunities for integration of planning on provincial Crown lands.

Staff are preparing an application for the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund - FireSmart Community Funding and Supports and will submit the application if Council's selects Option A.

ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Option A provides the District the opportunity to apply for to the UBCM FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program for an initial ask of \$200,000 to secure funding for a FireSmart Coordinator and associated costs. This application opens October 1st, 2022. UBCM Staff have indicated that applications take approximately 90 days to process. Fire Staff want to ensure that the District's application is the front of the queue when the UBCM begins processing 2023 applications. This timing will allow Staff to bring a fully informed proposal to Council as part of the 2023 budget process. Staff would likely seek 'early approval' so that FireSmart Coordinator recruitment timelines would allow the proponent to join the District in advance of the 2023 wildfire season.

In closing, Staff thank Council for their thoughtful consideration of this proposal. LCFD Staff would also like to acknowledge Senior Staff from the across the District that provided thoughtful input and expert guidance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Respectfully Submitted,
Darren Lee, Fire Chief

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	FireSmart Canada UBCM Grant Application.docx
Attachments:	- FireSmart Canada UBCM Grant Application.docx
Final Approval Date:	Sep 13, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Reyna Seabrook, Director of Corporate Services - Sep 13, 2022 - 2:31 PM

Trevor James, CFO, Director of Finance & Administration - Sep 13, 2022 - 1:44 PM