
MEETING TYPE: Regular Council Meeting
MEETING DATE: Tuesday, September 20, 2022
AUTHOR: [Sponsor]
DEPARTMENT: Protective Services
ITEM TITLE: UBCM Grant Application
DESCRIPTION: UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Grant Application for Structure Protection Unit

QUESTION

How does Council wish to address the opportunity to apply to the UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund – Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund for up to \$45,000 to assist the LCFD in procuring a Structure Protection Unit for the District, before grant applications close on October 21st, 2022?

OPTIONS

- A. THAT staff be directed to submit an application to the 2022 UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund, Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund for up to \$45,000 to assist the LCFD in procuring a Structure Protection Unit.
- B. THAT staff not apply for the UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund at this time, and prepare a revised application if the funding becomes available in 2023.

The District of Lake Country (District) and the Lake Country Fire Department (LCFD) have experienced several Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) emergencies in recent years. 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 impacts of the Nighthawk Fire extend well beyond the number of homes lost, as the phyco-social impacts can last for years. Over the past two decades, Staff and LCFD Firefighters have been repeatedly called upon to assist our partners in the Emergency Operations Centre and on the 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,
- Evolving 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 and the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF). 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 programs and activities.

[British Columbia Community Resiliency Investment Fund](#)

The Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) is a suite of funding programs intended to enhance the resiliency of local governments, First Nations and communities in responding to emergencies. Funding is provided by the Province of British Columbia and is administered by Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). As of May 2022, the funding streams were expanded to include:

- Disaster risk reduction-climate adaptation,
- Emergency operations centres and training,
- Emergency support services,
- Extreme heat mapping, assessment, and planning,
- Indigenous cultural safety and cultural humility training,
- Public notification and evacuation route planning, and
- Volunteer and composite fire departments equipment and training.

The intent of this funding stream is to build the resiliency of volunteer and composite fire departments in preparing for and responding to emergencies through the purchase of new or replacement equipment and to facilitate the delivery of training. Ongoing operational costs and the purchase of major fire apparatus are not eligible.

[UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund](#)
[CEPF – Volunteer and Composite Fire Department Training and Equipment Fund](#)

It is important to note that the District is currently conducting several Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) projects with CRI funding. Staff are also bringing forward a concurrent Request for Council Decision that seeks permission to apply to the UBCM for \$200,000 for locally directed FireSmart program funding under the CRI.

With this Request for Council Decision, Staff are seeking permission to apply to the CEPF – Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund for up to \$45,000 to assist the LCFD in procuring a Structure Protection Unit (SPU) for the District. The timing of this Request for a Council Decision is based upon the deadline for application to the fund. Staff have prepared a draft application for the CEPF - Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Training and Equipment Fund and will submit the application if Council's selects Option A. The deadline for submission to the UBCM is October 21st, 2022 and Staff are unable to guarantee that this funding will be available from the Union of BC Municipalities in 2023.

KEY INFORMATION

The history of SPU's in British Columbia dates back to 2003 Firestorm. When British Columbia ran out of firefighting resources, the Provincial Government called for support from other Provinces, States and Countries. Several teams trained in the use of SPU's landed in the Okanagan and the Thomson-Nicola. These teams specialized in preparing values at risk and then defending them with sprinklers that were activated just prior to the arrival of a wildfire. The tactics proved to be effective and safe for responders. One of the recommendations of the 'Filmon Commission' was for British Columbia to invest in SPU and SPU training. This recommendation added a safe and cost-effective capability to fire departments that would better protect communities from wildfire. SPU's owned and operated by various levels of government have grown in popularity over the past fifteen years. The British Columbia Structure Protection Program and the Interagency Working Agreement establish the rules of engagement and financial terms for provincial mutual-aid.

[British Columbia Structure Protection Program](#)
[2021 British Columbia Interagency Working Agreement](#)

Currently, this program does not apply to SPU's that are purchased with grant funding from the CEPF – Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund. If a local government or First Nation accesses these funds, the SPU and associated equipment is to be used solely for local operations. Staff see this as a positive from an operational and philosophical perspectives. The District would likely only ever have a single SPU, and if these

resources need to be readily available for use in the event they are needed. Having a District owned SPU staged in a LCFD fire station is a significant positive improvement for the District.

DESIRED BENEFIT

Based on their own experience and, the experience of their colleagues in the industry, Staff are aware of the benefits of having local access to a local operated SPU. The type of equipment carried on an SPU is ideal for protecting values at risk during a WUI incident. The obvious thought is to protect homes and businesses, but SPU's can be used to protect critical infrastructure such as water intakes and water treatment facilities. SPU's also have a history of use in the protection of culturally sensitive sites with minimal impact as well as support of extended attack on wildland incidents that occur within the District.

Staff have contacted the British Columbia Wildfire Service - Structure Protection Coordination Office (SPCO) and learned that the funding program specific to SPU's may run for multiple years. From this information, interested communities need to plan on a four-year timeframe to build up their SPU. As a result, this Request for Council Decision is likely the first of four that Council will see in advance of the District's annual budget cycle, or until the UBCM alters future deadlines. Once the SPU is fully built the ongoing costs will be associated with annual training and long-term renewal of depreciated assets.

Staff's intend to maximize the benefit of this provincial funding and build-up an SPU and associated SPU training over four years. The program is prescriptive as to what equipment can be added and when. The result will be a fully functional locally managed SPU for the District that is support by a contingent of highly trained LCFD Firefighters who specialize in SPU operations.

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

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

- Infrastructure – An SPU program can provide specific equipment to help defend critical infrastructure such as wastewater facilities, drinking water facilities and other assets by enhancing defensible space in and around these facilities.
- Economy - An SPU program can help make the local economy be more resilient by enhancing structure protection efforts around homes and businesses so that they are better prepared to withstand to the impacts of an advancing wildfire.
- Governance – An SPU program will create opportunities to work with regional partners, provincial partners and may also create future opportunities to support local First Nations in the event of a local or regional wildfire.
- Environment – An SPU program can help enhance the protection of FireSmart residences and businesses within the District and, help them to become more resilient to current and future wildfire potential.
- Social – An SPU program may allow the District Staff and FireSmart Staff to better connect with individuals, groups, and associations within the community.

As was mentioned above, SPCO personnel have indicated that funding should be available over the next four years to incrementally increase locally directed SPU Programs throughout the province. If Councils priorities shift over time, Staff will ensure that the evolution of the SPU Program remains in alignment.

REQUISITES

The deadline for submission to the UBCM is October 21st, 2022 and Staff is unable to guarantee that CEPF - Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund will be available from the Union of BC Municipalities in 2023. What is unclear to Staff, is the multi-year approach being taken by the SPCO given the uncertainty surrounding the CEPF beyond 2023.

UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund

CEPF – Volunteer and Composite Fire Department Training and Equipment Fund

As Staff work through the multi-year process of building an SPU Program, they will be mindful of the potential for funding to end after each year. Every effort will be made to ensure that as each new tool or capability is added, the District has options if the funding ends.

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES

If an application to the UBCM CEPF – Volunteer and Composite Fire Department Training and Equipment Fund is successful, the LCFD will have to provide storage for a specified twenty-foot cargo trailer starting in either 2023 or 2024. The LCFD can accommodate additional storage at Fire Station 71 in Winfield. Depending on short-term and long-term equipment and fleet requirements, space is also available at Station 81 in Carr's Landing and Station 91 in Oyama. The LCFD does have an existing complement of wildland firefighting equipment. Some of this existing equipment may be better situated on an SPU for enhanced accessibility. If Staff do find efficiencies in the deployment of resources, they will be actioned accordingly.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

As was referenced earlier, the history of SPU's in British Columbia dates back to 2003 Firestorm. When British Columbia ran out of firefighting resources, the Provincial Government called on support from other Provinces, States and Countries to assist. Several teams trained in the use of SPU's landed in the Okanagan and the Thomson-Nicola. These teams specialized in preparing values at risk and then defending them with sprinklers that were activated just prior to the arrival of a wildfire. One of the recommendations of the Filmon Commission was for British Columbia to invest in SPU and SPU training.

SPU's owned and operated by various levels of government have grown in popularity over the past fifteen years. The British Columbia Structure Protection Program and the Interagency Working Agreement establish the rules of engagement and financial terms for provincial mutual-aid and the use of SPU's.

British Columbia Structure Protection Program

2021 British Columbia Interagency Working Agreement

As was mentioned above, this program does not apply to SPU's that are purchased with grant funding from the CEPF - Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund. If a local government or First Nation accesses these funds, the SPU and associated equipment is to be used locally. Staff see this as a positive from an operational and philosophical perspectives. The District will likely only have a single locally operated SPU and, these resources need to be available for immediate use. Having an SPU staged in a LCFD fire station is a positive for the District and its regional partners.

The LCFD recently hired an individual with extensive training and experience in SPU operations. While training grants may be available, LCFD would be able to add SPU training sessions to its 2023 annual training plan without external supports. If external supports are available, Staff will ensure that LCFD access those training resources.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

If Council supports Option-A, Staff will be able to use the official Council Resolution to make application to the CEPF - Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund for up to \$45,000. Other than the investment of Staff time there is no financial risk to the District at the application phase. If the guidance provided by the SPCO holds true over the next four years, the District should be able to incrementally build an SPU Program with minimal financial impact on the Fire facilities and Equipment Reserve.

As was mentioned earlier, while Staff work through the multi-year process of building an SPU Program, they will be mindful of the potential for funding to end after each year. Every effort will be made to ensure that capability is built incrementally so that District has options after every year of the program.

APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

As was referenced above, the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) is a suite of funding programs intended to enhance the resiliency of local governments, First Nations and communities in responding to emergencies. Funding is provided by the Province of British Columbia and is administered by Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). As of May 2022, the funding streams were expanded to include:

- Disaster risk reduction-climate adaptation,
- Emergency operations centres and training,
- Emergency support services,
- Extreme heat mapping, assessment, and planning,
- Indigenous cultural safety and cultural humility training,
- Public notification and evacuation route planning, and
- Volunteer and composite fire departments equipment and training.

The intent of this funding stream is to build the resiliency of volunteer and composite fire departments in preparing for and responding to emergencies through the purchase of new or replacement equipment and to facilitate the delivery of training. Ongoing operational costs and the purchase of major fire apparatus are not eligible.

[UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund](#) [CEPF – Volunteer and Composite Fire Department Training and Equipment Fund](#)

With this Request for Council Decision, Staff are seeking permission to apply to the CEPF – Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund for up to \$45,000 to assist the LCFD in procuring a Structure Protection Unit (SPU) for the District. The timing of this Request for a Council Decision is based upon the deadline for application to the fund. Staff have prepared a draft application for the CEPF - Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Training and Equipment Fund and will submit the application if Council's selects Option A. The deadline for submission to the UBCM is October 21st, 2022 and Staff are unable to guarantee that this funding will be available from the Union of BC Municipalities in 2023.

IMPACT ON INFRASTRUCTURE OR MUNICIPAL SERVICES

As was referenced earlier, if the application to the CEPF – Volunteer and Composite Fire Department Training and Equipment Fund is successful, the LCFD will have to provide storage for a specified twenty-foot cargo trailer starting in either 2023 or 2024. The LCFD can accommodate additional storage at Fire Station 71 in Winfield. Depending on short-term and long-term fleet requirements, space is also available at Station 81 in Carr's Landing and Station 91 in Oyama.

Staff are aware of the benefits of having local access to a local operated SPU. The type of equipment carried on an SPU is ideal for protecting values at risk during a WUI incident. The obvious thought is to protect homes and

businesses, but SPU's can be used to protect critical infrastructure such as water intakes and water treatment facilities. SPU's have been used to protect culturally sensitive sites with minimal impact and have been used to support extended attack on wildland incidents that occur within fire protection districts.

IMPACT ON STAFF CAPACITY AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In terms of the impact on Staff Capacity, Staff have prior experience working with SPU's. The LCFD recently hired an individual with extensive training and experience in SPU operations. While training grants may be available, LCFD

would be able to add SPU training sessions to its 2023 annual training plan without external supports. If external supports are available, Staff will ensure that LCFD accesses those training resources. The procurement of specific equipment detailed in the application guide will take staff time, but this will be built into the LCFD 2023 work plans.

In terms of Financial Resources, Staff are seeking permission to apply to the CEPF – Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund for up to \$45,000 to assist the LCFD in procuring a SPU for the District. The timing of this Request for a Council Decision is based upon the deadline for application to the fund. Staff have prepared a draft application for the CEPF - Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Training and Equipment Fund and will submit the application if Council's selects Option A. The deadline for submission to the UBCM is October 21st, 2022 and Staff are unable to guarantee that this funding will be available from the Union of BC Municipalities in 2023.

Staff will be able to use the official Council Resolution to make application to the CEPF - Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund. Other than the investment of Staff time there is no financial risk to the District at the application phase. If the guidance provided by the SPCO holds true over the next four years, the District could be able to incrementally build an SPU Program with minimal financial impact on the Fire facilities and Equipment Reserve.

While Staff work through the multi-year process of building an SPU Program, they will be mindful of the potential for funding to end each year. Every effort will be made to ensure that capability is built incrementally so that District has options after every year of the program.

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 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 CEPF – Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund is a fit for the District. There is a synergy between the WRR projects conducted under the CEI, the concurrent ask for a FireSmart Coordinator under the CEI and an the SPU ask under the CEPF.

ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Option A provides the District the opportunity to apply for to the CEPF – Composite and Volunteer Fire Department Equipment and Training Fund for up to \$45,000 to assist the LCFD in procuring a SPU for the District. This grant will allow the District to utilize external funding to positively impact safety while preserving the Fire Facilities and Equipment Reserve for upcoming apparatus replacements.

As was mentioned above, SPCO personnel have indicated that funding should be available over the next four years to incrementally increase locally directed SPU Programs throughout the province. Is unclear if the funding for SPU's will remain in the CEPF or move to another fund in the future. While Staff work through the multi-year process of

building an SPU Program, they will be mindful of the potential for funding to end each year. Every effort will be made to ensure that capability is built incrementally so that District has options after every year of the program.

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

Respectfully Submitted,
[Sponsor]

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Structure Protection Unit UBCM Grant Application.docx
Attachments:	- RFCD-Structure Protection Unit 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 - 4:14 PM

Trevor James, CFO, Director of Finance & Administration - Sep 13, 2022 - 2:28 PM