

To: [Municipal Mayor and Council] or [First Nations Chief and Council]

From: Robert Lapham, Chief Administrative Officer, Capital Regional District and
Co-Chair, Regional Emergency Management Partnership in the Capital Region

Date: June 21, 2019

Subject: Regional Concept of Operations and supporting Memorandum of Understanding

RECOMMENDATION:

That Chief Administrative Officers be authorized to sign the Memorandum of Understanding that supports the Regional Concept of Operations during events of regional emergency significance.

BACKGROUND:

The Regional Emergency Management Partnership (REMP) in the Capital Region was established in March 2016 through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Provincial Government of BC and the Capital Regional District (on behalf of its member municipalities and electoral areas) to enhance agreed upon priorities for regional emergency management mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. It is an equal partnership between the BC Government and the Capital Regional District (CRD) Local Authority representatives, and there is equal representation from both partners on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee sets the direction for REMP's work. REMP's planning initiatives are supported by integrated working groups consisting of all levels of government, First Nations and stakeholder agencies and are reliant on collaboration and relationships to achieve success.

Creation of a Regional Concept of Operations for the Capital Region has been identified as a key priority on REMP's 2017-2019 Strategic Plan and subsequent annual business plans. It has also been an initiative that local government emergency program coordinators (EPCs) in the region have long been trying to bring to fruition in recognition that a large-scale emergency will cross jurisdictional boundaries. A Regional Concept of Operations is a description of the mechanism or system within which a group of organizations or individuals will work in during regional emergencies. The purpose of the project is to outline how local government (municipalities and Regional District), First Nations and the Province will work together during events of regional emergency significance.

For the past two years, REMP has focused time and resources on engaging the region to determine what the needs of a Regional Concept of Operations are and how best the region can work together to create a model for this.

REGIONAL CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:

- March 9, 2018: Local government Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) at the Local Area Administrators meeting endorsed the need for a Regional Concept of Operations and requested that REMP develop model options for consideration.

- June 12, 2018: REMP gathered local government, First Nation and stakeholder emergency program staff in the region to determine the components that the Regional Concept of Operations model needs to incorporate, to be presented to the CAOs. The four main components identified as necessary to the composition of the model included: A defined structure and governance; a trusted decision-making framework; political buy-in; and inclusive and personal engagement.
- October 16, 2018: REMP hosted a workshop with all CAOs in the region and Emergency Management BC (Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General) Deputy Minister to review the model options. Results from the workshop concluded that a CAO decision-making model, supported by a regional Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that shows a commitment from each signatory on behalf of their jurisdiction to use the model during response in the event of a regional emergency significance. The proposed signatories of the agreement are the CAOs from each jurisdiction within the region, the Deputy Minister of Emergency Management BC (EMBC) and Band Administrators from each First Nation community when willing to participate.
- January-March 2019: REMP created a model based on direction derived from 2018 engagement and began to share the model with partners for input.
- May 7, 2019: REMP held a regional workshop to explore potential regional issues that would require the Regional Concept of Operations to be activated. The three most pressing issues included issues around recovery operations, crisis communication, and water restoration and prioritization.
- May 11, 2019: REMP was invited to update the Local Area Administrators on the Regional Concept of Operations Project. During this meeting, REMP provided an overview of the Regional Concept of Operations model and a draft MOU for the Local Area Administrators for endorsement.

REGIONAL CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS MODEL:

The proposed Regional Concept of Operations model follows the recommendations of the CAOs within the region by explaining a step-by-step process for activating a CAO decision-making framework during an event of regional emergency significance. The purpose of the Regional Concept of Operations is to expedite decision making, information sharing and collaboration during an event of regional emergency significance.

The Regional Concept of Operations model was developed with a set of guiding principles as its foundation. These include: Respecting local autonomy; using existing structures and resources; enabling pro-active leadership; maintaining a scalable, flexible and layered approach; and remaining collaborative.

Implementation of the Regional Concept of Operations would provide many benefits to the region. Most notably, the opportunity for the region to collaborate and provide a united voice to the EMBC's Vancouver Island Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC) in a large-scale emergency event, when the PREOC may be supporting up to eight regional districts, 52 First Nations and 37 municipalities. The Regional Concept of Operations allows the Capital Region to come together to

provide recommendations to the PREOC and collaborate on decision-making to benefit the region in an event of regional significance. In addition, other values identified by the region's emergency program staff include: expanded and more efficient use of resources; better communications; better ability to sustain longer responses and recovery; common understanding of the overall shared vision or situation and more.

During an emergency event within the Capital region, as set out in the British Columbia *Emergency Program Act* (the Act), each local government is responsible for having an established emergency program and for activating their emergency response plans to respond to their local emergency. This is usually done by the emergency program coordinator in collaboration with the head of administration, such as the CAO. The Regional Concept of Operations model does not change the process that is set out in the Act. Instead, it complements the existing emergency management procedures when there is an event of regional emergency significance, empowering the municipalities, the Regional District, and the Province to come together to increase collaboration and coordination during a regional emergency event. When necessary, the Province or any local government can activate the Regional Concept of Operations to bring the region together to ensure collaborative decision-making, coordinated recommendations to the province, enhanced situational awareness and more. The model can also be applied to the region or subset of the region, dependent on the scope, scale, consequences and geographical scope of the event. The Regional Concept of Operations may be activated by either the Province, any municipality or the Regional District when:

- An event crosses (or has the potential to cross) jurisdictional boundaries
- There is potential negative impact(s)
- There is a heightened risk to other jurisdictions
- There are competing demands for critical resources
- There is limited access to a specific or required resources in a timely manner
- Event of issue is of interest to media or public throughout the region that requires specific coordination

Regular updates and communication in the development of the Regional Concept of Operations Model have been shared with local government and EMBC. The model has been shared with the Capital Regional District's Local Government Emergency Program Advisory Commission, the Local Area Administrators, Emergency Management BC and the REMP Steering Committee. No concerns or further changes were provided, and implementation of the model has been endorsed. The model is explained in detail in Attachment 2.

REGIONAL CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS PROCESS

During an event of regional emergency significance, the Regional Concept of Operations model process would include a combination of the following steps:

1. Local government EOCs may be activated, the Vancouver Island PREOC may be activated (however, there is no requirement that these are activated); an entity identifies that there is a need to activate the Regional Concept of Operations

2. Whomever initiates the activation notifies EMBC's Vancouver Island PREOC, who coordinates the meeting
3. EMBC Vancouver Island PREOC notifies all parties that the Regional Concept of Operations has been activated and provides a summary of the incident or event, regional issues, impacts and potential recommendations
4. A conference call is held for all CAOs in the region
5. During the conference call, the situation is presented, and a decision or guided discussion occurs
6. All CAOs report back the outcomes of the meeting to their Emergency Operations Centres (EOC)
7. Any necessary outcomes are actioned such as: Coordination of public messaging, sharing of resources, collecting further information, etc.
8. All parties continue to monitor the situation and reconvene as necessary

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS:

The Regional Concept of Operations ensures a coordinated response to regional emergencies and allows for agreed upon priority actions. Signing of the supporting MOU commits local government in the region to collaborating to ensure a coordinated response, appropriate capacity and prioritization of key resources and ongoing train and exercising of the model. The supporting MOU respects local autonomy and does not supersede the existing reporting structure local government has with EMBC as outlined in the BC Emergency Management System. The MOU represents the local government's commitment to maintaining open communications with the rest of the region and assessing the regional impact as part of its EOC decision-making process during regional emergencies.

If municipalities and the Regional District choose not to become signatories of the MOU to support implementation of the Regional Concept of Operations, there is no penalty or implication related to their legislative authority or relationship with the Province. However, those that do not wish to sign will not be considered a party to the model and may miss opportunities to collaborate in training, exercising, educating and refining of the model during the preparedness phase. It was noted in the development of the model that there is an expectation from the public that all jurisdictions in the region are already collaborating in emergency management in all phases (preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation), and that this would be the first step in working toward that public expectation. A tabletop exercise will follow the implementation to validate the Regional Concept of Operations using a regional issue that requires decision-making in Fall 2019.

Learning from major disasters that have occurred in the past, using a regional approach to share information and to seek input on regional issues that require collaborative decision-making has proven to be more effective than having each jurisdiction work individually. In BC's emergency management structure, it is expected that EMBC's Vancouver Island PREOC could have up to a total of 97 municipalities, regional districts and First Nations communities communicating with and requesting support from the PREOC individually.

EMBC's executive leadership has expressed support for the Regional Concept of Operations model, having been engaged throughout the development process, and the Deputy Minister of EMBC, who would be the signatory of the MOU, has indicated support-in-principle for signing of the MOU.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the Regional Concept of Operations or the supporting MOU.

ALTERNATIVES:

Chief Administrative Officers, through the Local Area Administrators Committee, have recommended that each municipality and the regional district commit to collaborating and coordinating during regional emergencies by signing the MOU (Attachment 3) and subsequently implementing the Regional Concept of Operations (Attachment 2) into their EOC standard operating procedures. Concurrently, REMP is engaging First Nations in the region to support their participation in the Regional Concept of Operations.

Alternatives are as follows:

- 1) That Chief Administrative Officers and Band Administrators be authorized to sign the Memorandum of Understanding that supports the Regional Concept of Operations during events of regional significance. *(Recommended)*
- 2) That Chief Administrative Officers and Band Administrators be directed to engage with the REMP Steering Committee regarding proposed changes to the Memorandum of Understanding or the Regional Concept of Operations.

CONCLUSION

As has been made evident throughout the province over the past few years, regional emergencies are becoming more and more common. Partnerships, coordination and joint planning have been widely recommended by several after action reviews and recommendation reports. The Regional Concept of Operations gives the region a chance to collaborate to present a united voice to the Province and a mechanism to share information within the region during a regional emergency. It is recommended that Mayors and Councils in the region support their Administration in signing this MOU to implement the Regional Concept of Operations to ensure public safety within the region is not impacted negatively by jurisdictional boundaries during an event of regional emergency significance.

ATTACHMENTS

1. REMP 2018 Annual Report (March 18, 2019)
2. [REDACTED]
3. Memorandum of Understanding: Regional Concept of Operations for Emergency Response in the Capital Region (May 2019)