



To: General Purposes Committee **Date:** August 8, 2005
From: Suzanne Bycraft **File:** 09-5125-03-02/Vol 01
 Manager, Emergency & Environmental Programs
Re: **Union of BC Municipalities Emergency Planning Funding Application**

Staff Recommendation

That the application to the provincial government, via the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, for funding under the 2005 Emergency Planning Program, as outlined in the staff report dated August 8, 2005, be supported.

Suzanne Bycraft
 Manager, Emergency & Environmental Programs
 (3338)

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CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>JW</i>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEWED BY CAO <i>Rob Reid</i>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) administrate a provincial government funding assistance program for local governments wishing to enhance emergency preparedness activities as mandated in the *Emergency Program Act*. Under the program guidelines, Richmond is eligible for a grant of \$17,500 for emergency plan review and updating; plan exercising and/or training; or hazard, risk and vulnerability assessment.

Staff wish to request funding through this grant program for development and exercise of an Emergency Information Plan. This plan would ensure that staff and the public are informed in a timely and accurate manner in the event of an emergency or disaster. The grant application guidelines require a resolution from Council approving the grant application. This report seeks the required approval.

Analysis

The need to inform staff and public in anticipation of and in response to emergencies is highlighted by media reports both locally and internationally. The lack of public information disseminated during a recent chemical spill into the Cheakamus River near Squamish, BC has resulted in possible lawsuits against CN Rail, the provincial government and the municipality of Squamish. Residents along the river were not informed quickly enough that their drinking water was potentially unsafe to drink.

By contrast, former City of New York Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, used a pre-planned and practised strategy to address the citizens of New York and the World after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre, September 11, 2001. This approach demonstrated how a well-planned public information strategy greatly enhances public communications during emergencies or disasters. Pre-planning is important as there is little time to develop strategies when disasters strike.

The City of Richmond employs a Manager of Communication and Corporate Programs, but does not currently have a formal plan in place to address emergency information needs. An Emergency Information Plan is currently being prepared which would establish an information team, identify spokespersons, outline a training program for positions identified, and provide resource lists and procedures for working with the media and translation agencies. This plan will ensure that appropriate information is provided to staff and public in a systematic and timely manner during an emergency or disaster.

Financial Impact

The provincial government/UBCM grant presents the opportunity for funding to assist in the development of the Emergency Information Plan. The City is eligible for a grant in the amount of \$17,500. Other funding associated with the development of the Emergency Information Plan will be accommodated within the current Emergency Programs operating budget.

Conclusion

There is an opportunity to obtain provincial funding, in the amount of \$17,500, to aid in the development of an Emergency Information Plan and exercise program. Staff recommends application for this grant to enhance the state of emergency preparedness and response for the City of Richmond.



Fiona Dercole
Emergency Management Coordinator
(1282)

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