

**DATE:** February 5, 2021

**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Regional District Board

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

**FILE:** 1700-02/2021/270

Supported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer  
***R. Dyson***

**RE: 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan – Emergency Program – Function 270**

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### **Purpose**

To provide the Board with the proposed 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan and work plan highlights for the Emergency Program Service, function 270.

### **Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

1. THAT the Board consider three readings and subsequent adoption of an amendment to Bylaw No. 1341, being “Electoral Areas ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ Emergency Program Extended Service Establishment Bylaw, 1991”, to increase the maximum requisition by 25 per cent, to be available for the 2021 fiscal year, in accordance with the Local Government Act and the Regional Districts Establishing Bylaw Approval Exemption Regulation, upon receiving written consent from the Directors for Electoral Areas A, B and C, being the participants in the service;
2. THAT the proposed 2021 – 2025 Financial Plan for the Emergency Program Service, function 270, be approved.

### **Executive Summary**

The following highlights some of the key elements that will influence the 2021 – 2025 Financial Plan and Work Plan.

- The overall proposed budget in 2021 totals \$613,133 or an increase of \$245,921 over 2020, which includes \$200,000 of BC Safe Restart COVID-19 grant funding.
- Safe Restart Grant funds in the amount of \$100,000 to enhance community partnerships and support vulnerable populations through the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), with a further \$100,000 earmarked to provide for EOC technology and systems upgrades;
- The tax requisition for 2021, levied to Electoral Areas A, B and C, is \$127,556, an increase of \$15,768 or 14.1 per cent over 2020;
- The Town of Comox, City of Courtenay and Village of Cumberland contribute through service agreements by method of converted hospital taxes for a total contribution in 2021 of \$196,443, an increase of \$21,913 from 2020;
- In order to maintain current service levels in both functions 270 and 271 which share a common establishment bylaw, an increase to the maximum requisition of 25 per cent for the 2021 fiscal year is recommended, which would result in a maximum levy equaling the greater of \$281,809 or \$0.03750 per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value;
- For a property assessed at \$500,000, the 2021 tax levy would be \$7.70, based on an estimated residential tax rate of \$0.0154 per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value (2020 - \$0.0143);
- The Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP) will be entirely revised;

It is hoped that the 2021 work plan highlights will include moving forward with completing the design and delivery of a functional earthquake exercise, as well as enhancing the Comox Valley Regional District’s (CVRD) Connect Rocket public mass notification system. These were both postponed in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

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**Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)**

Town of Comox	✓
City of Courtenay	✓
Village of Cumberland	✓

**Board Strategic Drivers**

Table 1 notes the degree of influence the drivers have on projects and work plans for the Emergency Program Service, function 270.

**Table 1: Board Strategic Drivers**

<p><b>Fiscal responsibility:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifying and applying for grants to enhance programming while maintaining an incremental tax requisition to ensure sustainable service delivery;</li> <li>full strategic program review in 2021 of the Comox Valley Emergency Program in preparation for the provincial <i>Emergency Program Act</i> review;</li> <li>work towards program efficiency through a regional service delivery bylaw.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Climate crisis and environmental stewardship and protection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>focus will be on the potential changes to emergency management as part of the provincial modernization project;</li> <li>increased focus on all four pillars of emergency management, with special attention to mitigation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community partnerships:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>preparation for 2021 earthquake emergency functional exercise;</li> <li>working collaboratively with Comox Valley Ground Search and Rescue to determine joint sustainable long term administration and operational facility needs;</li> <li>through the EOC and with BC Restart Funding, support Comox Valley not for profits who support the needs of vulnerable populations in the region.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Indigenous relations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue working closely with K’ómoks First Nation (KFN) on the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and joint recommendations;</li> <li>continue collaborating with and providing support to KFN on emergency preparedness planning</li> </ul>

## Rethink Comox Valley / COVID-19 Response and Renewal

The Rethink Comox Valley planning process began in the summer of 2020 with a review of service levels and all necessary, critical and functional projects slated for the next five years. The board approved actions to be taken at its strategic planning session in September and the resulting Rethink Comox Valley plan was endorsed on Oct 27, 2020.

The impacts of COVID-19 have resulted in significant challenges to emergency services including establishing and adapting the EOC to virtual operations as well as cancelling or adapting response training for emergency responders.

The largest impact was the postponement of the design and delivery of the Fracture on 5th Functional Earthquake Exercise. It is still unclear whether the CVRD will be able to complete this exercise in 2021.

## BC Safe Restart Grant Program

BC Safe Restart Grant funds of \$723,000 were received by the CVRD to provide funding opportunities associated with community recovery and the COVID-19 pandemic. Grant Funds totalling \$200,000 were allocated to the Emergency Program as supported in a board report dated December 10, 2020. Restart funds are being applied as follows:


- EOC Community Partnerships and Vulnerable Populations:
  - Through the EOC, direct outreach has been conducted to identify community needs and priorities, with specific attention on vulnerable populations most basic needs including emergency housing and access to basic facilities. Further community partner outreach can support youth organizations. A dedicated resource in the EOC conducted the outreach and also acts as a liaison between the EOC and the community partners. By providing dedicated restart funds to disburse as needed, real supports will be provided shortly within the community. The assignment of funds would be the responsibility of the EOC Director who will seek support from the EOC Regional Leadership Policy Group. This aligns with the community needs identified through the outreach to community partners. **Safe Restart Value = \$100,000;**
- Harmston Avenue EOC technology and systems upgrades:
  - A collaborative effort of the CVRD's facilities, Emergency Services and Information Technology Departments is realizing the installation of essential emergency communications systems at the CVRD's Harmston Avenue EOC facility. This includes the installation of the technology to support emergency radio communications through onsite radio equipment or the connection to a remote radio site. In addition, this project also includes upgrading and purchasing equipment and systems to operationalize the EOC meeting room and office spaces, enable a virtual EOC and enhancing the applicability and timely response for EOC actions. **Safe Restart Value = \$100,000.**

## Financial Plan Overview

The 2021 - 2025 proposed five-year financial plan for the Emergency Program Service, function 270, including service establishment information, the requisition summary and the operating budgets, is available. The full proposed budget binder, in both searchable PDF and e-reader formats, located on the CVRD financial plan web page at [www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/currentbudget](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/currentbudget).

Table 2 below summarizes the 2021 proposed budget as compared to the 2020 adopted budget. Significant variances from 2020 adopted budget will be discussed in the financial plan sections that follow.

**Table 2: Financial Plan Highlights**

 <b>2021 Proposed Budget</b>			
<b>#270 Comox Valley Emergency Program</b>			
Operating	2020 Budget	2021 Proposed Budget	Increase (Decrease)
<b>Revenue</b>			
Requisition	111,788	127,556	15,768
Senior Govt Grants	2,000	0	(2,000)
Sale Services Local Govt	174,530	196,443	21,913
Other Revenue/Recoveries	19,629	215,861	196,232
Transfer from Reserve	20,346	0	(20,346)
Prior Years Surplus	38,919	73,273	34,354
	<b>\$ 367,212</b>	<b>\$ 613,133</b>	<b>\$ 245,921</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>			
Personnel Costs	114,099	135,666	21,567
Operating	253,113	369,860	116,747
Contribution to Reserves	0	107,607	107,607
	<b>\$ 367,212</b>	<b>\$ 613,133</b>	<b>\$ 245,921</b>
<b>Capital</b>			
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
Transfer from Reserve		100,000	100,000
	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 100,000</b>	<b>\$ 100,000</b>
<b>Funding Applied</b>			
Capital Projects and Equipment		100,000	100,000
	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 100,000</b>	<b>\$ 100,000</b>

Highlights of the 2021 - 2025 proposed financial plan for the Emergency Program Service, function 270 include:

#### Service Establishment

In October 28, 1991, bylaw no. 1341 being “Electoral Areas ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ Emergency Program Extended Service Establishment Bylaw, 1991” was adopted by the Comox Strathcona Regional District to establish an extended service for Electoral Areas A, B and C to provide for preparation for emergencies. The maximum levy for this service was set at that time at \$0.03 per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value. The maximum levy applied to the original function 270 which was then subsequently split prior to the 2021 fiscal year, creating a separate CVEP budget under function no. 271 for the purpose of emergency planning and business continuity for CVRD electoral areas, distinct from those activities that remained in function 270.

As the participants of the service, Electoral Areas A, B and C contribute by way of an annual tax requisition while the three municipalities contribute through five-year service agreements which expire on December 31, 2021.

- Due to the ongoing growth and importance of this service, and in order to maintain current service levels in both functions 270 and 271 which share a common establishment bylaw, an increase to the maximum requisition of 25 per cent for the 2021 fiscal year is recommended,

which would result in a maximum levy equaling the greater of \$281,809 or \$0.03750 per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value;

#### Revenue Sources

- An annual tax requisition from the Electoral Areas A, B and C is levied as shown in Table 3. The proposed 2021 tax requisition represents an increase of \$15,768 from 2020.

**Table 3: Electoral Area Requisition**

Electoral Area Requisition	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Area A	\$41,532	\$48,287	\$48,287	\$48,287	\$48,287	\$48,287
Area B	\$30,518	\$34,455	\$34,455	\$34,455	\$34,455	\$34,455
Area C	\$39,738	\$44,814	\$44,814	\$44,814	\$44,814	\$44,814
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$111,788</b>	<b>\$127,556</b>	<b>\$127,556</b>	<b>\$127,556</b>	<b>\$127,556</b>	<b>\$127,556</b>

- The five-year administration service agreements with the Village of Cumberland, City of Courtenay and Town of Comox expire on December 31, 2021. Regionally there is some discussion on whether the continuation of the operating agreements is the best model in comparison to including the municipalities into the service. Staff will be bringing forth a report in 2021.

Converted hospital values are used to determine the amount that are proposed to be collected from the member municipalities under the service agreements as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Sale of Services - Local Governments**

Sales of Services of Local Government	2020	2021	2022*	2023*	2024*	2025*
Town of Comox	\$51,954	\$57,434	\$57,434	\$57,434	\$57,434	\$57,434
City of Courtenay	\$112,335	\$122,455	\$122,455	\$122,455	\$122,455	\$122,455
Village of Cumberland	\$14,924	\$16,554	\$16,554	\$16,554	\$16,554	\$16,554
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$179,213</b>	<b>\$196,443</b>	<b>\$196,443</b>	<b>\$196,443</b>	<b>\$196,443</b>	<b>\$196,443</b>

#### Other Revenue/Recoveries:

- Three other CVRD functions contribute \$8,082 to this service towards the Connect Rocket mass notification service fee and the associated Get Notified public media campaign. e.g. Boil Water, All Hazards
- Comox Valley Search and Rescue contributes towards the operating and maintenance of the Moray Avenue program office/back up EOC location.
- CVEP will continue to seek further senior government grants opportunities.

An estimated surplus carry forward of \$73,273 is currently budgeted in 2021 largely due to costs that were not incurred from the earthquake exercise design and delivery, not completed regional radio frequency projects and general surplus. Once the 2020 year end has been finalized, this will be reviewed and the requisition and municipal contributions may be adjusted.

### Personnel

Personnel costs for 2021 are proposed to increase by \$21,567 from 2020 due to some additional CVRD support staff allocations being charged to reflect the ongoing support being provided to this service.

The Emergency Program Coordinator position is 90 per cent allocated to this service with the Deputy Emergency Program Coordinator position allocated at 20 per cent. The equivalent of a further 0.25 FTE is also allocated which includes the General Manager of Community Services and a Branch Assistant.

### Operations

Operating expenses are proposed to increase by \$116,747 in 2021 to support the following projects with one of two initiatives supported 100 per cent through the BC Safe Restart Grant funds, except for staffing;

- Restart funded project - Community partnerships and vulnerable population response through the EOC; \$100,000;
- completion of design and delivery of the Fracture on 5<sup>th</sup> Functional Exercise \$47,000;
- contribution of funding of \$40,000 for the use of CVRD Harmston Civic Room B as Emergency Operations and Emergency Program space;
- development and delivery of training focused directly on supporting Regional EOC teams, EOC Policy Groups, First Responders and Emergency Services Volunteers in preparing for the earthquake exercise \$16,000;
- design and deliver a full media EOC and public education campaign for Fracture on 5<sup>th</sup> Functional Exercise and perform a pre-exercise evacuation door knocking awareness and education and video capture. \$10,000;
- contribution to have a contractor review and do comparison of CVEP programs as follow: Emergency Support Services, Emergency Radio Communications, NEPP \$15,000;
- NEPP for refreshing training, education materials, focused outreach and engagement \$6,500.

### Capital

A single capital project is budgeted for 2021, being a BC Safe Restart funded project - Harmston EOC outfitting technology and systems upgrades; \$100,000

### Reserves

Contributions to reserves in 2021 are \$107,607, which includes \$100,000 of BC Safe Restart funds coming from the Administration and General Government service. The remainder of the five-year financial plan include more modest reserve contributions.

The estimated balance in the future expenditure reserve fund at the end of 2020 was \$51,959. By the end of 2025 with ongoing incremental contributions the reserve balance is estimated to be \$92,829.

### Tax Impacts

- Based on the 2021 completed assessment roll, the estimated residential tax rate for this service is expected to be \$0.154 per \$1,000 (2020 - \$0.143) of taxable assessed value.
- For a residence with an assessed value of \$500,000, the total tax impact is \$7.70.

### **Citizen/Public Relations**

Each year the region is experiencing greater impacts from climate change that could jeopardise and put the community at risk. CVEP has completed a Hazards, Risks and Vulnerabilities Assessment and reviews it every five years to identify the top potential events that could occur to the region.

Attachments: Appendix A – CVEP Function 270 – 2020 Projects/End of Year Review  
Appendix B – CVEP Function 270 – 2021 Projects

**Comox Valley Emergency Program  
Function 270 – 2020 Projects  
Year End Review**

### **Response**

- COVID-19 pandemic:
  - Tuesday, March 17 activated and staffed regional Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) at Level 2
  - key purposes: for coordinated communications and collaboration on interpreting and addressing health orders for all local government operations (impacted 2020 Comox Valley Emergency Program (CVEP) work plans)
  - developed virtual capabilities and structure to support EOC team to work remotely
  - Level 1 regional EOC was still operational at as of Dec. 31, 2020
- Emergency Support Service Level 1 call outs
  - three City of Courtenay, one Comox, one Ships point, one Forbidden Plateau
  - 43 evacuees supported
  - 60 volunteer response hours

### **Program Management**

- support to our Emergency Support Services (ESS) volunteers in adjusting level 1-3 response delivery to adapt to COVID-19 Health Order measures
- reviewed Emergency Management BC (EMBC) Onboarding Agreement for the use and implementation of the online Evacuee Registration and Assistance Tool for virtual response
- creation of a Privacy Information Agreement for emergency program volunteers to be provide understanding of for signing
- implemented EMBC's online Evacuee Registration and Assistance Tool (training of ESS and CVEP staff in 2021)

### **Capital/Facility Projects**

- started implementation of improvements for Harmston EOC as a Regional EOC
  - computers (Thin Clients) were upgraded with Microsoft Office software
  - records management and file storage/back-up (Sync Cloud- remote access)
  - established EOC domain and email accounts with remote access capabilities
  - create draft Level 3 EOC floor plan set up to allow ability for EOC management team to be on site and still meeting COVID-19 Health Order requirements

### **Plan(s) / Guidelines**

#### **Tools**

- developed and delivered orientation to the EOC for Elected Officials
- designed and delivered an EOC Phase 1 debriefing process for COVID-19 pandemic
- created Phase 1 EOC After-Action Report for COVID-19 first wave



- working draft – EOC Activation Checklist for Harmston regional EOC

### **Training**

(Most EOC, Emergency management and emergency volunteer training was put on hold until safe and new methods to delivery were created)

- Emergency Management/EOC
  - implemented Zoom use for EOC, Emergency Program meetings and training
  - delivered EMBC EOC CORE workshop to the regional EOC team and alternatives

### **Emergency Radio Communications**

- regional emergency radio frequency obtain and infrastructure at CV Hospital installed- being tested (next steps- Letters of Use authorization for CV agencies and Public Works)

### **Exercises/Drills/Tabletops**

- Earthquake functional exercise (on hold until Health Orders allow larger teams/events)

### **Public Education**

(Public education was stopped due to COVID-19 until a virtual option was found and practiced)

- 19 Wing Family Resource Centre through Zoom (25 participants)
- Wachiay Friendship Centre through Zoom (10 participants)

**Comox Valley Emergency Program  
Function 270 – 2021  
Projects**

**Response**

- continuing with Level 1 Regional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to monitor COVID19 Pandemic and supporting Health Orders and key messaging
- continue to be on Emergency Management BC (EMBC) Provincial Regional EOC weekly Briefing calls
- support Regional EOC Leadership Policy Group
- continue Level 1 call outs response readiness support to Emergency Support Services (ESS) volunteers

**Program**

- through EOC outreach provide Restart Funding to not for profit organizations that support vulnerable populations in the Comox Valley
- restarted Emergency Planning Committee meetings through the use of Zoom
- perform review and comparison of Emergency Program programs (ESS, Emergency Radio Communications Team (ERCT), Neighbourhood Emergency Program and Business Continuity)
- advance planning Winter Seasonal Readiness Sessions and preparation for summer wildfires-Contingency Plan reviews
- establish mutual assistance process with neighbouring regional districts for ESS support
- continue work with our local emergency services support volunteers (EMBC Public Safety Lifeline) to achieve sustainable program and housing
- continuing to research successful approaches to increase ESS volunteer leadership

**Capital/Facility Projects**

- through Restart Funding available, work in collaboration with CVRD IT and facilities to continue implementation of improvements for Harmston EOC as Regional EOC Level 3
  - computers (Thin Clients) upgrade with Microsoft Office software
  - records management and file storage/back-up (Sync Cloud- remote access)
  - established EOC domain and email accounts with remote access capabilities
  - create draft Level 3 EOC floor plan set up
  - create ability for EOC Management Team to be on site and still meeting COVID-19 order requirements

**Plan(s) / Guidelines/Tools**

- development of flood readiness checklist (90 per cent complete)
- development EOC step by step orientation
- checklist to support personnel during activation (80 per cent complete)
- Regional Emergency Plan annual update binders and USB to Local Governments and Emergency Program Planning Committee (Target Sept 2021)

## **Training**

### Emergency Management/Emergency Operation Centre

- deliver in-house session developed by Calian focused EOC Business Cycle and Policy Group (fall 2021 on standby)
- shared and coordinated training opportunities as per EMBC calendar and other local government's planned courses

### ESS and ERCT Volunteers

- starting EOC training for radio operators- electronic to radio document procedures
- Amateur Radio Operator (basic- HAMS) course delivered (on hold - better as a face to face course)
- ESS training to use EMBC's online Evacuee Registration and Assistance Tool (2021 will be training ESS and CVEP staff how to use)

## **Exercises/Drills/Tabletops**

- Earthquake EOC Functional Exercise (on standby)
- looking to developing new methods through use of technologies to deliver tabletop and drills safely as COVID-19 continues:
  - tabletops for regional EOC Functional Sections (at Harmston EOC)
  - Regional EOC Leadership Policy Group
  - Mock set up of Level 2 EOC for virtual tour (summer or 2021)

## **Public Education**

- continue to deliver personal and business emergency preparedness sessions via Zoom and social media feeds:
  - Emergency Preparedness Week campaign; May- (annual)
  - Shake Out BC earthquake preparedness campaign: (October annual)
  - collaborated with Fire Services to provide FireSmart
  - Pop ups - Get Notified and Earthquake Preparedness booths (on hold)