

DATE: August 5, 2020**FILE:** 7200-20/CV**TO:** Chair and Directors
Regional District BoardSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer*R. Dyson***RE: COVID 19 -Update on Fracture on 5th Functional Earthquake Exercise**

Purpose

To update the Board on the Fracture on 5th Functional Earthquake Exercise and concerns stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic that will lead to exercise delay.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Comox Valley Regional District Board support postponing the Fracture on 5th Functional Earthquake Exercise until the fall of 2021;

AND FURTHER THAT the 2021 – 2025 financial plan for the Comox Valley Emergency Program Function 270 budget reflect the carry-over of unused portions of 2020 funding directed for the exercise's design and delivery.

Executive Summary

In 2019 the Comox Valley Emergency Program (CVEP) contracted Calian Ltd. to lead the design and delivery of a functional earthquake exercise to take place on October 15, 2020. CVEP is now recommending postponing the exercise delivery until the fall of 2021.

Below are the key points that led to the above recommendations:

- A Public Health Emergency was declared on March 17, 2020 due to COVID-19;
- Since March most of the exercise design team has been focused on their agencies response to COVID-19 and staying operational;
- Many on the design team are preparing for a potential second wave this fall, which aligns with the original exercise date (October 15);
- Contingencies to hold the exercise in 2020 were explored but Exercise Design Team (EDT) members did not deem them feasible in the current environment;
- EDT members indicated an overwhelming preference to delay the exercise until the fall of 2021;
- Calian Ltd. is agreeable to the delay and willing to extend the contract until the end of 2021.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

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Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland	✓
K'ómoks First Nation	✓
Fracture on 5 th Exercise Design Team	✓
CVEP Planning Committee	✓

Background/Current Situation

In 2019 CVEP contracted Calian Ltd. to lead the design and delivery of a functional earthquake exercise to take place on October 15, 2020. The project was for the delivery of the exercise with Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) training to local governments and offer a substantial public awareness and preparedness education campaign to residents through the year leading up to the exercise.

Due to Provincial Public Health declaring an emergency on March 17, 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the Comox Valley Regional EOC was activated. In addition to local government support many Comox Valley response agencies and local authority personnel who had been contributing their time as EDT members had to drop their commitment to the exercise and focus on the pandemic response.

With indications from the Public Health Officer that the pandemic would likely continue until a vaccine was created and there being the strong potential for a second wave of the pandemic in the fall of 2020, CVEP reached out Calian Ltd. to create design/delivery contingency options to consider. Several options were developed, however it was quick to see from discussions with EDT members that they could no longer provide any commitment of time and/or resources to the exercise project while addressing the pandemic, the Provincial Health Orders and assisting with implementation of BC's Restart Plan.

Without these critical contributors to the exercise's design and delivery, it was decided to approach Calian with a request to postpone the functional earthquake exercise project until the spring of 2021 and amend the agreement to reflect the end of 2021.

On July 15, 2020 Calian offered in writing that they were fully supportive of the decision to postpone the exercise until such time as it can be executed in a manner that will be beneficial our team. They also recognize that EDT members at this time cannot commit time and resources while also addressing COVID-19 concerns. As such, Calian will be adjusting the exercise's project benchmarks/timelines and completion date to allow for the extension of the contract until the end of 2021.

CVEP is recommending postponing the exercise design until spring of 2021 and delivery of the exercise until fall of 2021, keeping in full consideration the unknown future of COVID-19 impacts.

Policy Analysis

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. On January 29, 1996, Bylaw No. 1816 being "Comox Valley Emergency Disaster Program Policy Agreement Bylaw No. 1816, 1996" authorized the CVRD to enter into an agreement for Emergency Program Services with the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox and the Village of Cumberland to jointly exercise powers conferred pursuant to the *Emergency Program Act*, R.S.B.C. 1993, Chapter 41. The municipal agreements were renewed in 2017.

This service meets the Board's current interests as a core service in emergency planning as required under the *Provincial Emergency Program Act* for the Comox Valley.

Options

- a) Postpone the Fracture on 5th Functional Earthquake Exercise until the fall of 2021.
- b) Cancel the exercise.

Staff are recommending option A as option B would result in the loss of approximately \$20,000 that has already been paid towards the exercise design and training up until the COVID-19 pandemic.

Financial Factors

The 2020-2024 financial plan for Function 270 reflects the following remaining funds that were approved to support the functional exercise's design/delivery, training and public education communication campaign:

- a. \$50,000 for design and delivery (with approximately \$2,500 to be expended in 2020)
- b. \$17,000 for public awareness and education communication campaign
- c. \$14,000 for training
- d. \$2,500 for meeting expenses

In the Emergency Services portion of the Renewal Plan possible reductions have been suggested for items b and c which were suspended completely for 2020 for further consideration in September.

Intergovernmental Factors

The Fracture on 5th Functional Earthquake Exercise offers all local authorities in the Comox Valley an opportunity to engage in designing, training and participating throughout the exercise process, as they wish. The main focus is to provide a controlled, safe and supportive environment for all local authorities to learn, work collaboratively in a regional approach, and practice responding to the natural hazard expected to have the highest consequence/impact on the Comox Valley.

Interdepartmental Involvement

CVEP has approached all CVRD departments to offer them the opportunity to be part of either the exercise's design and/or engaged in the delivery. Some of the key areas of engagement have been sewer, water, critical infrastructure and those personnel offered EOC training with an opportunity to participate in the exercise.

Citizen/Public Relations

The CVRD encompasses a geographic area of approximately 1,725 sq. kms and a population of 66,195 as per the 2016 census. An earthquake is one of Vancouver Island's top potential disaster event having the highest consequences and in 1946 the residents of Comox Valley and surrounding area experienced 7.5 earthquake centre 15 km (9.3 mi) deep in the Forbidden Plateau. A great mechanism for bringing higher awareness towards being better prepared for such an event is through the emergency program's ability to offer training and public awareness and education. Due to COVID 19 pandemic still occurring, we have had to postpone the functional exercise design, delivery and the public education campaign processes until later into 2021.