



AUDITOR GENERAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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BACKGROUND

March 21, 2018

TOWN OF SIDNEY PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

WHAT WE AUDITED

- The performance audit was on the topic “*Emergency Management in Local Governments.*”
- Our specific audit objectives were to assess the alignment of the local government emergency management system with legislative requirements and to determine the level of statutory compliance for a local government’s emergency management program.
- We also examined the robustness of the organization’s emergency management plans, programs and practices to determine whether they provide for a timely response to and management of the consequences of an emergency event. Finally, we assessed whether the local government has developed a business continuity management system containing the recovery procedures necessary to resume critical operations in the event of a disruption.
- We included Sidney along with the Capital Regional District, District of Mission and Fraser Valley Regional District in audits on this topic. These auditees were chosen because they represent different sizes of local governments and include both municipalities and regional districts.
- The audit covered the most current emergency management plans and programs. We completed our examination work for this audit in October 2017.

WHY WE CHOSE THIS TOPIC

- Local governments are a major part of British Columbia’s public sector, providing a wide range of critical core services that could be affected by emergency events. Given the importance of these services, all local governments should take a comprehensive, coordinated and organized approach to emergency management.

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- Emergency management involves all levels of government, each of which needs emergency management plans.
- Provincial law requires that local governments create local emergency plans and guidelines setting out the priorities and means by which they will restore essential services following an emergency or disaster.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE AUDIT

- During the period covered by the audit, B.C. communities faced several significant emergency events, including wildfires, flooding and increased concern over possible tsunami events.
- The office of the AGLG initially planned to include the City of Quesnel and the Cariboo Regional District in audits under this topic, but elected to change this plan due to wildfire events in the region that led the Province of B.C. to announce a comprehensive independent review in that region. In order to not duplicate any of this work, the AGLG revised its list of auditees to instead include the District of Mission and Fraser Valley Regional District.

WHAT WE FOUND

- Overall, the Town of Sidney has made good progress in developing its emergency management plans and programs. The Town complied with the requirements set out in the *Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation*, it developed an Emergency Response and Recovery Plan and a Business Continuity Plan supported by comprehensive risk assessment and business impact analysis.
- For the Town of Sidney to improve its emergency management program, it should develop or enhance some of the key areas including: a strategic approach to emergency recovery and business continuity and its coordination with the emergency management; review and revision of emergency management plans and related documentation on a regular basis; staff awareness and training; regular exercises of all aspects of the emergency management program; and a performance measurement system.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

- We have made 13 recommendations aimed at helping the Town of Sidney build on its existing emergency management foundation.
- Our recommendations include action to enhance Sidney's emergency management and business continuity management by:

- Enhancing its governance of emergency management by, for example, improving its bylaws, establishing a management executive committee, and others
- Strengthening planning by, for example, identifying a shared emergency management coordinator and developing evacuation routes based on hazards and specific scenarios
- Ensuring cost-effective resourcing by, for example, tracking volunteers time spend on emergency management
- Improving emergency management training to staff
- Taking on additional preparation activities, including debriefing, consistent documentation and conducting a wide area earthquake exercise
- Enhancing data collection and analysis and establishing a performance measurement system
- Developing an approach to emergency recovery and business continuity, including governance, planning, training and exercising, as well as performance measurement

ABOUT THE AGLG

- The office has now released audit reports on six different topics, covering local governments in all regions of the province.
- Reports on the Capital Regional District, District of Mission and the Fraser Valley Regional District's emergency management will follow in coming months.

CONTACT:

Gordon Ruth, Auditor General for Local Government

Gordon.Ruth@aglg.ca

604-930-7100

www.aglg.ca