



## AUDITOR GENERAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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# BACKGROUND

December 6, 2018

## CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

### WHAT WE AUDITED

The performance audit was on the topic, “*Emergency Management in Local Governments.*”

We reviewed the Capital Regional District’s (CRD) performance in emergency management, including plans related to the four phases: mitigation and prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. It also covered business continuity management and related key elements such as governance, policies and procedures, communications, training and exercising and monitoring, reporting and updating.

We included the CRD along with the Town of Sidney, the District of Mission and the 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 period January 2012 to December 2017. We completed our examination work for this audit in June 2018.

### 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 tsunami preparedness.

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 that region during 2017 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 the Fraser Valley Regional District.

## **WHAT WE FOUND**

The CRD was successful in meeting most of the expectations included in our audit objectives. Over the last few years, it made significant progress with its emergency management program and implemented good practices to ensure an effective response during an emergency.

However, we found that the CRD lacked some measures that would help ensure recovery of the community and critical operations in the event of disruption.

### **Governance and Statutory Requirements**

Overall, the CRD had met all emergency management legislative requirements. It established relevant bylaws and governance structure, prepared its community risk assessment and local emergency plans, including supplementary procedures where it outlined key response activities, public notification methods and guidance to provide food, shelter and other social services during emergencies.

### **Emergency Planning**

We found that over the last few years, the CRD made significant progress in its emergency management program at the corporate and electoral area levels and implemented good practices in emergency planning and management to ensure effective response during an

emergency. However, its emergency management approach focused on emergency preparedness and response phases and lacked content for the recovery phase and business continuity.

### **Resourcing**

The CRD had budgeting and financial management procedures for its emergency management services, which aimed to ensure that the program was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and budget.

### **Training**

The CRD had identified long-term training requirements on emergency management and had plans to meet these training needs over time. It provided foundational training on emergency management to its board members, emergency management staff and volunteer members. We identified opportunities to strengthen training.

### **Exercising and Testing**

Staff conducted various types of emergency exercises, including emergency operations centre exercises, tabletop exercises, communication and response exercises. However, most exercises were not joint or full-scale exercises that included the corporate office, electoral areas and all other relevant parties to test collaboration.

### **Public and Stakeholder Awareness and Education**

The CRD prepared and provided materials on emergency management to raise public awareness and had an emergency notification system in place.

### **Maintenance and Continuous Improvement**

The CRD had continuously improved its emergency management program during the period covered by this audit. However, there were opportunities to develop a performance measurement system and strengthen its monitoring and reporting of emergency management program results.

## **WHAT WE RECOMMEND**

- We have made nine recommendations aimed at helping the CRD build on its existing emergency management strengths.
- Our recommendations include action to enhance the CRD's emergency management and business continuity management by:

- Building on its already-strong governance and processes to ensure that it fulfills its statutory responsibilities
- Strengthening emergency planning, including regular review and updating of plans and building an organizational business continuity management system
- Enhancing its emergency training for Board members
- Conducting full-scale and/or larger-scale joint exercises and enhancing exercises related to business continuity
- Improving data collection, analysis, monitoring and reporting on its emergency management program

### **ABOUT THE AGLG**

- This is the second performance audit report issued by the office of the AGLG on this topic and the 27<sup>th</sup> overall report released by the office since its 2013 opening. (The office has also released five Perspectives booklets).
- The office has now released audit reports on six different topics, covering local governments in all regions of the province.
- A report on the Town of Sidney was previously released and reports on the District of Mission and the Fraser Valley Regional District's emergency management will follow.

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