



AUDITOR GENERAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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BACKGROUND

December 12, 2019

FRASER VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

WHAT WE AUDITED

- This performance audit was one of a series on emergency management in local governments.
- We reviewed the Fraser Valley Regional District's performance in emergency management, including alignment of the local government emergency management system with statutory requirements, robustness of the emergency management plans and practices related to the four phases: mitigation and prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The audit also assessed the business continuity management system.
- We have previously audited emergency management performance for the Capital Regional District, Town of Sidney and District of Mission. These auditees were chosen because they represent different sizes of local governments and include both municipalities and regional districts.
- The audit covered Fraser Valley Regional District's emergency management plans and programs that were in place as of March 2019. We reviewed the period from January 2018 to March 2019 and also looked as far back as January 2015 for financial data and trend analysis. We completed our examination work in May 2019.

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.
- Emergency management involves all levels of government, each of which needs emergency management plans.

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- 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, communities across B.C. faced significant emergency events, including wildfires, flooding and increased concern over tsunami preparedness.
- We initially planned to include the City of Quesnel and the Cariboo Regional District in audits under this topic. We changed our plan due to wildfire events in the region that led the Province of B.C. to announce a comprehensive independent review. In order to not duplicate any of this work, we revised our list of auditees to instead include the District of Mission and Fraser Valley Regional District.

WHAT WE FOUND

- While the Fraser Valley Regional District did have some elements of an emergency management program, it only partially met the expectations included in our audit objectives:
 - The Regional District did not appear to fully comply with the Local Government Act. Its extended service bylaws were not sufficient to formally provide emergency management services within electoral areas. In addition, the Regional District did not maintain separate financial records for services extended to electoral areas, as required by provincial statutes
 - The Regional District only partially complied with statutory requirements set by emergency management regulations
 - The Regional District did not have an effective emergency management governance structure and processes in place
 - Almost all of the Regional District's emergency management and business continuity planning processes were either not developed or required significant improvements

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

- We have made 15 recommendations aimed at assisting the Fraser Valley Regional District further develop its emergency management and business continuity activities.
- Our recommendations include enhancing emergency management and business continuity management by:

- Reviewing and revising its emergency management service regime to ensure it is fully compliant with the Local Government Act and emergency management regulations
- Establishing an effective emergency management program governance structure and processes
- Developing a strategic and cohesive approach to emergency management and business continuity supported by revised or new bylaws and comprehensive plans that include program goals and objectives

ABOUT THE AGLG

- This is the fourth performance audit report we have issued on this topic
- We have released audit reports and leading practice booklets on six different topics, covering local governments in all regions of the province.
- The office has released reports on emergency management practices in the Capital Regional District, Town of Sidney and District of Mission.

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