



REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: CS-BRD-359

From: Community Services

Date: November 21, 2024

Subject: Interprovincial Mutual Aid Agreement

RECOMMENDATION: [Corporate Unweighted]

That the Regional Board authorize staff to negotiate an Interprovincial Mutual Aid Agreement with the County of Grande Prairie Fire Services.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

At the PRRD Regional Fire Chiefs meeting on March 6, 2024, emergency services representatives from the County of Grande Prairie in Alberta were invited to discuss opportunities for further collaboration, including the benefits of a cross-boundary, inter-jurisdictional response for emergencies. Chief Grant from the County of Grande Prairie in Alberta highlighted several missed opportunities during the 2023 fire season, which were primarily attributed to the absence of a formal mutual aid agreement. It was noted that the geographical border between British Columbia and Alberta hinders efficient emergency response.

Currently, without an inter-provincial agreement in place, fires within 10 km of the border can only be acted upon if they pose a threat to the Province of Alberta. The discussion at the PRRD Regional Fire Chief's meeting emphasized the need for a formalized approach to better inter-provincial response. Similar to the interprovincial agreement between the Tomslake Fire Department and Saddle Hills County which exists for the Gundy Fire Protection Area, a Ministerial Order is required to establish a comprehensive mutual aid agreement across provincial borders. In turn, advocating for an inter-provincial mutual aid agreement through Ministerial Order would also require consent and support from PRRD's jurisdictional fire service providers.

At the May 30, 2024, Regional Board meeting, the Regional Board resolved the following:

MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED,

That the Regional Board request written support from fire service partner jurisdictions for pursuit of an inter-provincial mutual aid agreement between the PRRD and the County of Grande Prairie.

Staff approached the fire service partner jurisdictions and received formal letters of support from 81% of the service partners, with the remaining 19% offering verbal support.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

- Interprovincial Collaboration
- Emergency Management
- Explore Opportunities for New or Enhanced Mutual Aid Agreements

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

None at this time.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

None at this time.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):

Entering into a formal interprovincial mutual aid agreement with the County of Grande Prairie Fire Services will provide further training opportunities for members within the fire service and resource sharing opportunities during emergency response.