



Staff Report For Information

TO: Committee of the Whole – July 10, 2025
AUTHOR: Rob Michael, Chief, Gibsons & District Volunteer Fire Department
SUBJECT: **Fire Protection Alternatives**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide information on fire protection alternatives within the Sunshine Coast Regional District.

This report is for information. No staff recommendation accompanies this report and Committee of the Whole action is not required.

BACKGROUND

The SCRD Board adopted the following motion (317/24) in-part on November 28, 2024:

Recommendation No. 10 *Gibsons and District Fire Protection Commission Minutes of October 21, 2024*

Recommendation No. 3 *Preliminary Petition to Expand Gibsons and District Fire Protection Service Area*

AND THAT SCRD Staff report back on alternatives to providing fire protection service outside of established fire protection areas.

DISCUSSION

There are areas within the Sunshine Coast Regional District where there is no established fire protection as shown in Attachment A. The attachment highlights addressed properties that are not within a fire protection district. This report lists some of the more common alternatives to fire protection available to residents on the Sunshine Coast.

Province of British Columbia

The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) has an [out of jurisdiction policy](#) (revised in February 2025) that establishes parameters under which task coverage can apply for road and rescue services (including fire suppression). The ultimate authority for road rescue service providers and fire departments to respond out-of-jurisdiction rests with their government's Council or Board. In the case of an incident that required fire department resources to protect life safety, a task number would be requested from the Province. The policy clearly defines out-of-scope activities for fire suppression as incidents where there is no entrapment (life safety risk). It also describes that fire suppression efforts beyond what is necessary for the rescue of trapped subjects is not covered.

FireSmart

Funding for the SCRD FireSmart program is provided by the Province of BC and is administered by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). The FireSmart Community Funding and Supports funding stream provides financial support to local governments and First Nations in BC to increase community resiliency by undertaking community based FireSmart planning and activities that reduce the community's risk from wildfire. The SCRD has been successful in obtaining this grant funding and has developed a regional FireSmart program. The goal of FireSmart is to empower homeowners to increase their resilience to wildfire on their properties and in their communities. This is done through free hazard assessments to all Sunshine Coast property owners. The team makes themselves available to offer advice on ways to reduce fire risks, and recommend FireSmart standards to resident's properties.

BC Wildfire Service

The BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) is responsible for managing and preventing wildfires on provincial Crown land. They can also respond to wildfires on other lands if they pose a threat to human life or property. Wildland firefighters are not trained or equipped to respond to structure fires; however, BCWS can organize a structure protection response throughout the province when critical infrastructure and residences are threatened by wildfire. Management of structural firefighting resources is administered by the [Inter-Agency Operational Procedures and Reimbursement Rates](#). The agreement between the Fire Chief's Association of BC and the BC Wildfire Service details the responsibility for response to wildland urban interface incidents.

The BCWS also has a [rural and remote firefighting program](#). Under the Wildfire Act, BCWS can hire temporary employees to assist with wildfire related activities. This includes local societies, associations and fire brigades who are located outside of fire protection areas, are ready to operate under BCWS guidance. They are also required to meet specific training and safety standards.

First Nation Emergency Services Society

The [First Nations' Emergency Services Society](#) (FNESS) serves First Nations in developing and sustaining safer and healthier communities through: emergency planning (training, response and recovery) and fire suppression (training, education and prevention). They do this through leadership and collaborative relationships with values of courage, honesty, integrity, passion, respect and trustworthiness. FNESS has a fire services team that can assist First Nations in delivering programs that create safer, more prepared and better-equipped communities.

Fire Brigades

In areas outside of established fire protection service boundaries, some communities may consider forming fire brigades as a means of providing local fire response. These brigades are typically community-led and may be organized as volunteer groups or societies.

While not part of a local government fire protection service, fire brigades may operate independently and vary in their structure, capacity, and scope. They may focus on initial

response efforts, fire prevention, or support during wildfire events, depending on local needs and available resources.

All fire departments (including fire service societies and/or fire brigades) are required, by legislation, to adhere to the Provincial [Training Standards](#). The Sunshine Coast Regional District does not oversee or fund fire service societies or fire brigades. However, there are some organized fire protection groups within the Sunshine Coast Regional District boundaries.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

n/a

LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) administers and enforces British Columbia's fire safety legislation. This includes establishing minimum training standards for firefighters, fire inspectors and investigators.

The BCWS is responsible for managing and preventing wildfires on provincial Crown land. They can also respond to wildfires on other lands if they pose a threat to human life or property.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

N/A

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are areas within the Sunshine Coast Regional District where there is no established fire protection. There are alternatives to fire protection available, such as: The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness out of jurisdiction policy, the SCRD FireSmart program, BC Wildfire Service Rural and Remote Firefighting Program and the First Nations' Emergency Services Society.

ATTACHMENT(S):

A – Sunshine Coast Regional District addressed parcels outside of fire protection areas

Reviewed by:			
Manager		Finance	
GM		Legislative	
CAO	X – T. Perreault	Other	

Attachment A - Sunshine Coast Regional District addressed parcels outside of fire protection areas

