
Subject: Mutual Assistance Agreement for Emergency Management

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Recommendations

1. That Regional Council **APPROVE** entry into the Mutual Assistance Agreement as an equal partner with the 12 local area municipalities to facilitate necessary assistance required during an emergency situation.
2. That the Chief Administrative Officer **BE AUTHORIZED** to execute the mutual assistance agreement and any ancillary documents on behalf of The Regional Municipality of Niagara.

Key Facts

- In Niagara, there is a long history of municipalities helping each other in times of need. However, to ensure that appropriate provisions are in place to allow cross-jurisdictional emergency support, a mutual assistance agreement between Niagara's municipalities, including the Regional Municipality, is required.
- This assistance specifically includes personnel and equipment above and outside of normal services provided to the local municipalities directly or through a two-tier delivery model on any normal daily basis.
- Approval of the Mutual Assistance Agreement enhances the Region's ability to respond to an emergency or disaster situation, thereby reducing the impact on the community.

Financial Considerations

This report will not, in itself, propose any new financial implications for the Niagara Region. However, within the Mutual Assistance Agreement template would be the ability for a municipality to recover the cost of providing assistance if requested.

Analysis

The Mutual Assistance Agreement is proposed to be permissive in nature and non-binding. It serves to protect staff and municipal legal interests when requested and to help their communities during times of need. This agreement does not in itself replace any existing Fire Services Mutual/Automatic Aid Plan. Rather it builds on the same spirit of cooperation to better facilitate assistance where practical and appropriate. When an

emergency exists, regional and municipal employees as well as partner agencies take such action(s) under emergency management plans as may be required to protect the health, safety, welfare and property of the community. The ability to allow for cross-jurisdictional emergency support between Niagara's municipalities and the Region will strengthen the ability to provide critical services and resources to residents during challenging circumstances.

Based upon the Fire Mutual Aid Agreement, this new Mutual Assistance Agreement addresses the sharing of personnel, equipment and services as required to ensure the delivery of essential services in an emergency situation (e.g. natural disaster). In some instances, this "sharing" of resources was already being done but no formal agreement was in place. Without an agreement in place, municipalities were left open to risk for any injuries or damages.

In 2012, a working group made up of CAO's, human resource specialists and emergency management personnel was assembled to develop a project proposal, agreement template and operating guidelines for mutual assistance. The proposal and template was presented to the Niagara CAO's in September 2012 and approval in principle was given to allow further development.

This agreement has recently been vetted through the Niagara Region Legal Division as well as reviewed by the 12 Municipal Community Emergency Management Coordinators. The resulting agreement, when enacted, would allow any municipality needing assistance to make an appeal to neighbouring municipalities for assistance. That request for support would be made by the CAO of the municipality requesting assistance to the CAO of the municipality being requested to provide assistance.

The agreement is written to be permissive in nature yet non-binding and is empowered by the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* as follows:

The Council of a municipality may make an agreement with the Council of any other municipality or with any persons for the provision of any personnel, service, equipment or material during an emergency. R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9, s. 13 (3); 1999, c. 12, Sched. P, s. 9.

A municipality that signs into the agreement is not obligated to provide assistance if requested. Their ability to assist or not assist would be determined by the municipality at that time. Under the agreement, assistance would be provided based upon a number of conditions, including but not limited to the municipality's requirement to ensure essential services in their own jurisdiction. This agreement is meant to be proactive instead of reactive, to protect the safety of staff, municipal assets and ensure that communities do not put themselves at risk by helping neighbours during their time of need. Therefore, by signing into the agreement the municipality benefits from having legal, cost recovery and other risk management issues detailed and agreed upon in advance.

The agreement documents will be provided to the Community Emergency Management Coordinators (CEMC's) in each of the 12 local area municipalities to present to their Council following approval by Regional Council. The goal is for completion of the formal, region-wide agreement in time for Emergency Preparedness Week in May 2019 where the announcement would be made publicly.

Alternatives Reviewed

The Emergency Management program is constantly assessing priorities and best methodologies for service delivery. The Mutual Assistance Agreement will assist in further strengthening the working relationship and sharing of resources in and amongst the region and 12 lower area municipalities.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Approval of the Mutual Assistance Agreement enhances the Region's ability to respond to an emergency or disaster situation, thereby reducing the impact on the community, while supporting the strategic priorities of Council.

Other Pertinent Reports

No other pertinent reports.

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