

SINGLE SOURCE REQUEST - CANADIAN RED CROSS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE SERVICES

Recommendation

That a single source agreement between the City of Edmonton and The Canadian Red Cross Society for a one-year term commencing on April 15, 2025, and for an amount not to exceed \$15 million including GST, for the provision of emergency shelter and support services, as outlined in the March 5, 2025, Community Services report CS02911, be approved and that the agreement be in form and content acceptable to the City Manager.

Requested Action	Decision required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Healthy City		
City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)		Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Conditions for service success
Corporate Business Plan	Managing the corporation		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bylaw 19091 - Emergency Management Bylaw 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 19, 2025, CS02834, Emergency Management Update April 10, 2024, EFRS02433 Single Source Request - Canadian Red Cross for Emergency Response Services August 14, 2024, EFRS02613 Amended Single Source Request - Canadian Red Cross for Emergency Response Services August 15, 2024, EFRS02542 Emergency Management Program Update 		

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Executive Summary

- With significant wildfire events in 2023 and 2024, a high risk of wildfires is expected in 2025. This risk necessitates strategic and prudent planning to anticipate accommodating people displaced by emergencies.
- This report proposes a proactive single-source procurement of emergency response services from The Canadian Red Cross Society (“Canadian Red Cross”) for up to \$15 million. By leveraging the expertise, capacity and reliability of the Canadian Red Cross, Administration can better prepare to effectively address evacuee needs in reception centres when necessary to support Edmontonians and when called upon to do so by the Government of Alberta.
- A proactive agreement sets the terms and conditions for anticipated work, but does not commit the City to spend these funds. If the agreement is leveraged to support a request for assistance from another municipality, the City recovers the cost from that municipality through a mutual aid agreement. If the support request is initiated by the Government of Alberta, the City recoups these costs from the impacted municipal authority who in turn recovers the funds from the Government of Alberta through a multi-year settlement process under the provincial Disaster Recovery Program.
- In 2024, Administration spent \$10.2 million on services from the Canadian Red Cross for two event activations.
- The City of Edmonton remains committed to supporting other municipalities experiencing evacuations due to wildfires when asked by the Government of Alberta to activate a reception centre.

REPORT

As a major municipality, the City of Edmonton is called upon by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency to support individuals displaced by natural disasters, including wildfires. Supporting displaced individuals requires the immediate provision of emergency accommodation services and Administration requires the support of an external organization to address the high volume of requests. In 2024, the City of Edmonton assisted 4,701 people displaced by wildfires across Alberta. Through a multi-year settlement process, Administration transfers emergency management response costs to the requesting government organization.

For more than 10 years, the Canadian Red Cross has played a key role in the City of Edmonton's emergency response services. The Canadian Red Cross provides the conduit between Administration's initial evacuee intake and processing, and the subsequent placement and coordination of displaced people into accommodations. Administration previously engaged the Canadian Red Cross as needed.

Similar to 2024, Administration anticipates the expenditures required to support wildfire response will exceed the City Manager's delegated authority. A proactive agreement provides structure to the services that will be used in the upcoming wildfire season and provides Administration the ability to respond to multiple events of different magnitudes.

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At the April 10, 2024 Executive Committee meeting, Administration received approval for an initial \$9 million agreement (Edmonton Fire Rescue Services report EFRS02433 Single Source Request - Canadian Red Cross For Emergency Response Services). Based on the scale of the Jasper Complex Wildfire, Administration returned to Executive Committee on August 14, 2024, receiving approval to increase the financial threshold to \$20 million with a term expiring on December 31, 2024 (EFRS02613). This extension enabled Administration to continue providing support services to a high volume of displaced people until they were safely able to return to their home communities or long-term interim housing.

Justification for Recommendation

The Canadian Red Cross has a long-standing reputation and expertise in providing emergency shelter and support services during times of crisis, trained personnel and resources, making them a reliable partner in effectively managing disaster evacuations.

The proposed \$15 million, one-year agreement with the Canadian Red Cross enables the City to have in place a key component of its reception centre planning ahead of the anticipated wildfire season. Administration recommends this approach based on the following:

- *Expertise and experience:* The Canadian Red Cross possesses unparalleled expertise in disaster response and management. They have a proven track record of efficiently coordinating and providing emergency accommodation services during various emergencies across Canada. Relying on their experience ensures a swift and well-coordinated response to the accommodation needs of evacuees.
- *Comprehensive support services:* Accommodation services provided by the Canadian Red Cross extend beyond mere shelter provision. They offer a range of support services such as emergency lodging, transportation and family reunification, as well as referrals to other essential services to complement those provided by Administration's Emergency Support Response Team and other City resources. This holistic approach helps to address the diverse needs of evacuees and contributes to their overall well-being during challenging times.
- *Efficiency and coordination:* The Canadian Red Cross streamlines the process of obtaining accommodation services, ensuring a more efficient and coordinated response to disaster evacuations.
- *Consistency and standardization:* Working with a single provider like the Canadian Red Cross ensures consistency and standardization in the quality of accommodation services offered to evacuees from different regions. This uniformity promotes fairness and equity in access to essential resources during times of crisis.

The proposed agreement enables emergency response continuity for the City of Edmonton, without binding Administration to spend a minimum amount for this arrangement.

Budget/Financial Implications

The requested \$15 million agreement will allow the City to engage the Canadian Red Cross as required, at negotiated rates and under set terms and conditions, up to the total amount of the

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agreement over a one-year period from April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026. It does not represent a spending commitment or forecast. Services secured through this agreement will be invoiced to the impacted municipal authorities who will in turn recoup the majority of the costs from the province through the provincial Disaster Recovery Program. For reference, Canadian Red Cross support costs were \$8.7 million in 2023 for three event activations and \$9.3 million in 2024 for two event activations. Should additional services be required from the Canadian Red Cross beyond the \$15 million in 2025, Administration will seek approval for an amendment to the agreement.

In 2023, Administration spent a total of \$16.9 million for wildfire costs, has recovered \$14.8 million of the 2023 costs, and is working with impacted municipalities to collect the remaining \$2.1 million. The outstanding 2023 recoveries are expected to be cleared by Q2 2025. In 2024, Administration spent \$11.64 million to support Alberta wildfires and is continuing to work with the impacted communities to finalize invoicing and cost recovery. The City uses its working capital funds to pay for the costs, with recovered funds returned to working capital. No interest is charged on outstanding amounts.

Legal Implications

As per the City Administration Bylaw 16620, procurement agreements over \$1 million that do not arise from a competitive procurement process must be approved by the appropriate Committee of Council. The City is subject to trade agreements that require an open competitive process for procurements of this value, unless a trade agreement exemption applies. For this procurement, there is an exemption in each applicable trade agreement. Under each of the New West Partnership Trade Agreement and the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, the exemption is procurements from a non-profit organization.

Community Insight

The City of Edmonton recognizes a successful emergency plan and response is informed by coordinated action between individuals, communities, industry, government and other mutual aid partners. Although there are general standards on how events are managed, partners work together to ensure the response is appropriate for the particular incident or emergency. Through many activations, the Emergency Management Program has adapted and expanded the approach based on guidance from user experience. Measures to respond to diverse needs have included halal meals, ensuring the safety and security of pets, partnering with different organizations to enhance stress management and supporting religious diversity.

Administration is also mindful a key participant group is the City employees who operationalize the program. In times of stress and prolonged response, Administration determines how psychological health and safety can best be supported through the City of Edmonton's robust health and safety program. Having Red Cross resources in place allows the City to draw upon a significant sized and skilled workforce to offset the labour of the core service delivery team.

GBA+

Specifically considering the risk to Edmonton for climate change-related events, Administration understands the impacts are magnified for specific populations including seniors, youth and

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children, Indigenous peoples, racialized populations, people with disabilities, people who are pregnant, frontline emergency responders, residents of northern and remote communities, individuals who are socially and economically disadvantaged, and people who are immunocompromised and those living with pre-existing illness¹. Understanding who is most at risk allows the City of Edmonton's approach to be planned appropriately to varying needs.

When people are displaced due to emergencies, more significant impacts are felt by those who have disabilities, speak primary languages other than English, have limited access to immediate emergency funds and those who have experienced previous trauma. The Emergency Management Program is adaptable and has responded to many different needs and works with partners to provide people with the most appropriate support given an individual or community's situation. The Emergency Management Program adheres and aligns with the Corporate Indigenous Framework and the Corporate Accessibility Guidelines, and continues to look for ways to deliver an inclusive and compassionate response to Edmontonians and any other individuals requiring the City's assistance.

Environment and Climate Review

This report was reviewed for environment and climate risks. Based on the review completed no significant interactions with the City's environmental and climate goals were identified within the scope of this report.

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/climate-change-health/populations-risk.html>