



## **Subject: Development of a Council Commendation Program**

### **APPROVALS:**

Bob Couture, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

### **Administrative Recommendations:**

1. THAT Administration be directed to:
  - (a) proceed with an inaugural event to recognize the numerous individuals involved in the first 100 hours of the 2016 wildfire event, and allocate any needed funds from the existing Council budget;
  - (b) investigate opportunities for the creation of a commemorative landmark to recognize the significance of the 2016 wildfire events, and the heroic efforts of those involved in fighting it; and
  - (c) develop a Council Policy for a long-term commendation program for Council's consideration.
  
2. THAT all costs associated with the proposed Commendation Program incurred in 2016 be funded from:
  - (a) the 2016 Regional Council Operating Budget;
  - (b) the 2016 corporate-wide Operating Budget; or
  - (c) the Emerging Issues Reserve,in that order.

### **Summary and Background:**

On May 3, 2016, many areas of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo were devastated by wildfire. More than 2000 homes were lost to the fire, and thousands of residents were forced to make a rapid evacuation from the community. During the first 100 hours of the wildfire event, heroic efforts were made to save lives and homes and to stop the fire. Numerous individuals, including first responders, emergency services personnel, municipal employees, industry partners and contractors, and citizens/volunteers, participated in this effort and should be recognized accordingly.

At the present time, the Municipality does not have a policy to govern such recognition; therefore, it is suggested that Council consider creating a Commendation Program to award and recognize individuals for deeds or acts of service or valor that is outstanding, exceptional and beyond the expected normal call of duty.

Despite the lack of approved policy, the extraordinary and heroic efforts of those involved in battling the wildfire, and particularly in the first 100 hours of the event, should be formally recognized at the earliest possible opportunity. It is proposed that such recognition would occur at a public event, with honorees being presented with a citation and lapel pin. It is also proposed

that a formalized policy be developed and implemented, with clearly established eligibility criteria, be developed to guide any such future events.

**Budget/Financial Implications:**

The cost of the inaugural event is expected to be approximately \$15,000-\$25,000, and can be accommodated within the approved 2016 Regional Council Operating Budget.

**Rationale for Recommendations:**

The 2016 wildfire events that devastated our Municipality also highlighted the incredible bravery, heroism, dedication and sheer tenacity of a number of individuals. These individuals have received media attention locally, provincially, nationally and globally, but have not been formally recognized for their extraordinary efforts. The proposed Council Commendation Program would serve to provide the level of formal recognition to these individuals, but would also establish a clear foundation to award and recognize anyone whose actions are outstanding, exceptional and beyond the expected normal call of duty.

**Strategic Plan Linkages:**

Pillar 1 – Building Responsible Government