

Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2025

To: Elizabeth Tracy, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Cameron Adams, Fire Chief

Subject: Implications of the *Fire Safety Act* for Municipal Operations

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the recently implemented *Fire Safety Act* (the Act), outlining key rules and regulations and associated responsibilities for municipalities. The report informs Council about the implications of Act for the Village and recommends steps to ensure legislative compliance and community safety.

BACKGROUND

The [*Fire Safety Act*](#) came into effect August 1, 2024, replacing the *Fire Services Act*. The new legislation establishes a modernized framework for fire prevention and safety across British Columbia. Its primary objectives include reducing fire-related risks, enhancing accountability, and promoting consistency in fire safety practices.

DISCUSSION & COMMENTS

Implementation of the Act brings opportunities to improve fire safety practices while posing challenges that will require careful consideration and planning. The Act designates municipal councils as monitoring entities, explicitly holding them accountable for ensuring compliance with provisions of Part 6 in the Act. This places a critical accountability on councils to oversee and enforce the implementation of fire safety measures within their jurisdictions.

Opportunities:

1. **Improved community safety:** Implementation of the Act will significantly reduce fire-related risks and enhance the overall safety of residents and businesses.
2. **Revenue generation:** The ability to charge reasonable fees for fire inspections allows a municipality to offset the cost of the increased administrative burden of compliance monitoring imposed by the Act.

Challenges:

1. **Resource constraints:** The increased workload associated with inspections, reporting, and enforcement will strain current resources unless additional staffing and funding are provided.
2. **Community resistance:** Property owners and businesses may resist the introduction of additional compliance requirements and associated inspection fees.
3. **Training and Expertise:** Staff must be adequately trained to standards established by the fire commissioner as per section 8 and section 23 of the Act. Enforcing the Act and conducting risk assessments will require time and financial investment.

Considerations:

- **Establishing a fee structure:** While inspection fees can offset administrative costs, the fee structure must be fair and not disproportionately burden small businesses and nonprofit organizations.
- **Coordination with provincial authorities:** Clear lines of communication with provincial agencies are critical to ensuring alignment with reporting standards and compliance expectations.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Regularly reviewing the implementation process will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the municipality remains responsive to evolving needs.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop an enhanced training program to ensure Pemberton Fire Rescue staff and paid on call volunteers are prepared to fulfill new responsibilities under the Act.
- Implement inspections fees to offset increased administrative costs.
- Develop, in collaboration with the communications and engagement coordinator, a communications and engagement plan to inform and educate the community about the implications of the Act and about fire safety more generally.
- Hire a dedicated Fire Prevention Officer who will be responsible for the increased compliance monitoring and reporting responsibilities.
- Establish processes to ensure clear lines of communication with provincial agencies.

Council's support is essential for addressing these challenges effectively and leveraging the opportunities presented by the Act. Council's approval of additional costs is currently being sought as part of the 2025 budget process.

The *Fire Safety Act* introduces significant changes that enhance fire prevention and safety across British Columbia. While it presents new responsibilities for municipalities, it also provides opportunities to strengthen community safety and allows costs to be offset through inspection fees. With the support of Council, Pemberton Fire Rescue will ensure compliance with the Act and demonstrate leadership in fire safety.

COMMUNICATIONS

Pemberton Fire Rescue will work with the communications and engagement coordinator to inform and educate the public about the *Fire Safety Act* and fire safety in general.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Part 6 and sections 8 and 23 of the *Fire Safety Act* outline several legal considerations that municipalities must address to ensure compliance. These include:

1. **Accountability and liability:** Municipal councils, as the monitoring entity, are legally accountable for implementing a risk-based compliance monitoring system. Failure to meet these responsibilities may result in legal challenges.
2. **Inspection fee regulation:** Municipalities must ensure that fees charged for inspections are deemed reasonable and justifiable under provincial guidelines.

3. **Enforcement and compliance:** Clear documentation and adherence to standardized protocols are essential to mitigate risks of legal scrutiny during enforcement actions.
4. **Designation of fire inspector and investigator:** Local authorities (Council) must designate a person or class of persons that meets established training standards by July 31, 2025. The position of Fire Prevention Officer has been proposed to satisfy this requirement.
5. **Contractual obligations:** Any agreements with external parties (such as those with the SLRD and Lílwat Nation) for fire safety services must align with the legal framework established by the ACT and provincial standards.

BUDGET & STAFFING

Fulfilling the expanded responsibilities under the *Fire Safety Act* will necessitate additional staff to handle increased inspections, reporting, and community engagement. Hiring a dedicated Fire Prevention Officer is strongly recommended to manage these tasks effectively.

Additional costs for enhanced training will be covered by the Office of the Fire Commissioner or included in the 2025 draft budget.

Pemberton Fire Rescue will seek Council support to implement a fee structure for inspections to generate revenue to offset these additional costs.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL IMPACT

Pemberton Fire Rescue will work with Corporate & Legislative Services and Finance to develop a fee structure for compliance monitoring inspections.

COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Implementation of the Act has no impact on the Community Climate Action Plan strategies.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This initiative aligns with the following [strategic priorities](#):

- Plan and manage growth: Implementing fire safety inspections for a safe community
- Be prepared: Providing a robust public education program for all the communities we serve.
- Protect our environment: Continuing to follow best practices for minimum environmental impact.
- Cultivate trust: Building relationships by providing fire safety education and assistance through best practices and communication throughout our region.
- Operate with excellence: Striving to excel in delivery of all the services we provide.

IMPACT ON THE REGION

Implementation of the *Fire Safety Act* will have both direct and indirect effects on the region. It is expected to improve fire prevention and safety measures, leading to a safer environment for

residents and businesses. However, these changes come with operational and financial considerations that will need to be addressed.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

RECOMENDATIONS:

THAT: The Council directs staff to bring forward options for a fee structure for conducting fire safety inspections.

Prepared by:	Cameron Adams, Fire Chief
CAO approval:	Elizabeth Tracy, Chief Administrative Officer