



# The Corporation of the District of Central Saanich

## REGULAR COUNCIL REPORT

For the Regular Council meeting on Monday, April 13, 2026

Re: FireSmart Community Funding Grant

---

### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

~~1.~~ That Council provide a resolution supporting the District of Central Saanich submitting a joint application to UBCM under the Community Resilience Investment Program, FireSmart Community Funding & Supports stream, with the District of Central Saanich acting as the primary applicant and the District of North Saanich as the sub-applicant, and that the District of Central Saanich be authorized to receive and administer the grant funding on behalf of both municipalities.

Formatted: Normal, Indent: Left: 0.25", No bullets or numbering

### **PURPOSE:**

To seek Council's direction and support to submit the District's joint grant application with the District of North Saanich to the UBCM Community Resilience Investment Program (CRIP) 2026 FireSmart Community Funding & Supports [Stream](#).

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) fund is a program designed to reduce the risk of wildfires and mitigate the impacts on British Columbia communities. This Provincial function is administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). There are several funding streams available, and the District would like to continue with the FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program. This program provides local governments and First Nations communities the ability to increase resiliency by undertaking community based FireSmart planning and activities that support the reduction of risk from the impacts of wildfires.

Strengthening wildfire resilience remains an important priority for the District, particularly in areas where residential neighbourhoods interface with forested landscapes.

Over the past three years, the District's FireSmart Program has supported wildfire risk reduction in Central Saanich through community education, property assessments, and collaborative initiatives aimed at improving local preparedness. Funding received through the current grant has enabled the District to implement a range of FireSmart activities that align with the objectives outlined in the District's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Key program activities have included:

- Community education, outreach, and public engagement
- Home and property wildfire risk assessments
- Vegetation management and FireSmart landscaping guidance
- Neighbourhood recognition initiatives for strata and organized communities
- Collaboration with regional, provincial, and First Nations partners

These initiatives have historically been supported through provincial grant funding streams delivered annually through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities FireSmart Community Funding and Supports program.

Recent updates to the provincial funding framework have introduced several constraints, including the elimination of funding for fuel management and wildfire impact recovery, as well as a transition to one-year funding terms for all applications. While FireSmart program activities remain eligible, municipalities must now reapply annually and compete within the revised funding structure.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The upcoming closed intake will be assessed through a competitive process based on merit and alignment with funding priorities. All applications submitted by April 30, 2026 will be considered together, with eligible submissions scored on their alignment with program objectives, overall merit, and priority. Funding for this intake is limited, and high demand is anticipated, likely resulting in a substantially oversubscribed process.

FireSmart programming is inherently relationship-based and relies on dedicated staff to deliver consistent outreach, property assessments, and ongoing support for residents. Without stable, multi-year funding, sustaining long-term planning, community engagement, and neighbourhood-level wildfire risk reduction becomes increasingly challenging.

Funding eligibility is determined by a municipality's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) classification. Higher-risk communities may receive allocation-based funding with more predictable access, while lower-risk communities must apply through the competitive intake process, which generally provides smaller funding amounts. Risk classification is based primarily on publicly owned lands and infrastructure, as private property data cannot be collected without landowner participation. As a result, assessed risk levels may not fully capture wildfire risk across the broader community, particularly where residential areas interface with forested lands.

In response to these changes, regional collaboration may strengthen the District's ability to access future funding and improve program delivery. A coordinated approach with North Saanich would allow both municipalities to align training, outreach, and implementation efforts while improving efficiency for staff, contractors, and volunteers. Given the increasing wildfire risk across British Columbia, losing or reducing this program would greatly impact our proactive risk reduction efforts and community preparedness.

Both municipalities share significant Wildland Urban Interface areas, particularly around LAU, WELNEW/John Dean Provincial Park, where residential neighbourhoods and parkland interface with forested landscapes. Collaborative planning in this area may also support improved coordination with the BC Wildfire Service and the Capital Regional District, while creating opportunities to further strengthen partnerships with WSÁNEĆ First Nations in future program initiatives.

#### **IMPLICATIONS:**

##### **Financial/ Resource**

The total grant application is for \$400,000. The amount is split evenly between the two municipalities based on our current Risk Level 3.

The current FireSmart Program is funded through UBCM Community Resilience Investment Program, FireSmart Community Funding & Supports grant. There are no other funds identified in the 2026/27 budget for this program if the application is not successful.

### **First Nations**

Both WJOLELP (Tsartlip) and S7ÁUTW (Tsayout) First Nations currently receive grant funding that supports FireSmart coordination within their respective communities. This new grant would allow the District to continue working collaboratively with neighbouring communities and First Nations that are undertaking similar wildfire risk reduction initiatives.

Engagement with Tsartlip First Nation and Tsawout First Nation will occur in a respectful and collaborative manner, recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge, particularly where FireSmart education, prevention activities, or risk reduction initiatives occur near shared boundaries.

This work will also focus on supporting awareness and education opportunities, while encouraging community participation in FireSmart initiatives and potential future grant applications within First Nations communities.

Where appropriate, nearby local authorities will be consulted when wildfire risk assessments or program activities occur in proximity to First Nations lands. Building on the relationships that have been established and continue to strengthen, the District of Central Saanich hopes to explore opportunities for future collaboration with the Nations on FireSmart initiatives and potential joint funding opportunities.

### **Legal/HR**

If funding through this grant opportunity is not secured, the FireSmart Program would be at risk, including the potential loss of the program coordinator position. Under the revised application criteria, should grant funding be reduced or unavailable, the District would need to consider one of the following options:

- Temporarily suspend the program until funding becomes available;
- Significantly scale back program activities; or
- Incorporate program costs into the municipal budget, establishing the FireSmart Program as a permanent, municipally funded initiative.

### **OPTIONS:**

#### **Option 1 (recommended):**

That Council provide a resolution supporting the District of Central Saanich submitting a joint application to UBCM under the Community Resilience Investment Program, FireSmart Community Funding & Supports stream, with the District of Central Saanich acting as the primary applicant and the District of North Saanich as the sub-applicant, and that the District of Central Saanich be authorized to receive and administer the grant funding on behalf of both municipalities.

**Option 2:**

That the District of Central Saanich submit an application to UBCM under the Community Resilience Investment Program, FireSmart Community Funding & Supports stream as the sole applicant, consistent with previous applications.

**CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, the FireSmart Program is a critical tool for reducing wildfire risk, enhancing community resilience, and fostering collaboration with neighbouring communities and First Nations. Through a joint application with the District of North Saanich, with Central Saanich as the primary applicant, this grant will support coordinated program delivery, maximize efficiency, and strengthen regional partnerships. Securing funding will allow the District to maintain program capacity, continue engagement with residents and First Nations, and build on existing relationships. Without this funding, the program's continuation would be uncertain, requiring consideration of reduced scope or municipal support. Investing in FireSmart now ensures the District is well-positioned to address wildfire risk and leverage future regional and funding opportunities.

Report written by:	Lisa Banfield, Emergency Program Manager
Respectfully submitted by:	Stacey Lee, Fire Chief/Director of Fire and Emergency Programs
Concurrence by:	Christine Culham, Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Appendix A: UBCM FireSmart Application
- Appendix B: Wildland Urban Interface shared with the District of North Saanich