

Corporate Report

NO: R025

COUNCIL DATE: FEBRUARY 26, 2007

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: February 9, 2007

FROM: General Manager, Finance & Technology FILE: 0250-07

SUBJECT: BC Municipal Safety Association – Coordinator Position

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council endorse the UBCM initiative to support the request from the BC Municipal Safety Association for a funded coordinator position and the proposal that WorkSafeBC levy one-cent per \$100 of assessable payroll to the local government sector.

BACKGROUND

WorkSafe BC (formerly WCB) is introducing a Partners Program that is intended to encourage employers to adopt management systems in Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) and Return to Work (RTW) programs. Employers, who implement a standardized OH&S Program and/or a RTW System that meets the qualifying requirements, will receive a Certificate of Recognition (COR). This Certificate could eventually result in a reduction of local government assessments of up to 15% (i.e. Under the current circumstances, this is estimated to be \$170,000).

Employers voluntarily participate in the Partners Program through an industry association that has an agreement with WorkSafeBC to act as the certifying partner. The Certifying Partner will coordinate the maintenance and delivery of the program elements to the employer and assist the employer with certification.

The local government sector falls under more WorkSafe BC regulations than any other industry in BC. This challenge creates a need to provincially pool resources to cost effectively meet the needs of all municipalities. The BC Municipal Safety Association (BCMSA) is a not-for-profit organization, registered under the Societies Act of BC that currently represents 79 member municipalities in British Columbia. This Association could act as the certifying partner for its member municipalities if it had a fully-funded coordinator position.

DISCUSSION

The City of Surrey has been a member of the BCMSA since 1998, and currently sits on the executive. At this point, all activities of the Association are conducted by volunteers, who are Municipal or Regional District employees with safety responsibilities.

Surrey has benefited from programs developed by the Association such as development of municipal industry specific safety awareness videos, training systems and comprehensive health and safety programs.

In order to take on the added responsibility of acting as a Certifying Partner for the Partners Program, BCMSA is requesting that a full time coordinator position be created that would:

- Work with municipalities to help them implement, evaluate and maintain industryspecific health and safety programs;
- Research and develop programs aimed at improving worker safety and reducing injury costs (return to work programs, Partners in Injury Reduction programs, etc.);
- Offer and/or coordinate accessible, standardized and cost-effective industry-specific training to municipal employers, managers, supervisors, and workers on a wide variety of workplace health and safety topics;
- Create a library of videos and printed materials available for members' use;
- Act as an industry liaison between WorkSafe BC representatives and industry members;
- Be available to research and answer any health and safety questions or concerns, and
- Assist employers when required to meet compliance after orders have been written on the municipality by WorkSafe BC.

It is proposed that WorkSafe BC will administer a levy of a one-cent per \$100 of assessable payroll to support this initiative. This is estimated to generate approximately \$150,000 per year, which would be used to cover salary, and administrative expenses, as well as the costs to facilitate programs on behalf of municipalities. The budget would be administered by the Board, of which Surrey is a member. Activities undertaken for specific municipalities would be on a cost-recovery basis.

In order to proceed, support is needed from 50% of the assessable payroll in the municipal classification unit. WorkSafe BC has suggested UBCM as the appropriate body to approach employers about their interest in supporting this initiative.

Earlier this year, the UBCM Executive endorsed, in principal, a one-cent levy through WorkSafe BC, to fund a full time coordinator for the BC Municipal Safety Association. The UBCM Executive is seeking endorsement from its members for support of a funded safety coordinator for the BCMSA. Currently, over 5044% have already endorsed the initiative.

Based on 2005 payroll and assessment figures offered by WorkSafe BC specifically for the City of Surrey a levy of one-cent per \$100 of assessable payroll would cost approximately \$8,400 per year. This can be managed within current funding allocations. Successful completion of the COR program could result in a refund of WorkSafe Assessment of up to \$170,000. It is therefore recommended that the City of Surrey support this initiative.

CONCLUSION

The BC Municipal Safety Association requires a full time coordinator/administrator in order to move forward on projects aimed at improving the health and safety of workers within the Local Government Classification Unit, including administration of the Certificate of Recognition program. One cent per one hundred dollars of assessable payroll within the municipal classification unit would provide sufficient operating funds for this purpose. Return on investment could be realized through cost savings in assessment rates, as a result of reduced injuries, reduced absence duration, and through a refund of assessment through participation in the Certificate of Recognition Program.

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