



**CITY OF KINGSTON**  
**REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**Report No.: 12-127**

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**TO:** Mayor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Denis Leger, Commissioner, Transportation, Properties & Emergency Services

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Harold Tulk, Fire Chief  
John Cross, Manager, Emergency -Management

**DATE OF MEETING:** May 1, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Northern Evacuees Hosting and Community Support

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Province of Ontario, through Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) had recently asked municipalities to determine their willingness and ability to potentially host northern evacuees in the event that flooding in the James Bay region required the evacuation of some northern Ontario communities. The City had also been contacted in the past with similar requests regarding forest fires which happen from time to time in the northern part of the province. The latest request may be the first of many requests in the future.

In order to provide consistently available, reliable and centralized accommodations and services to evacuees from northern Ontario, the City's Municipal Control Group (MCG) has determined that a consolidated regional approach would be the most effective manner in which to support the needs of the evacuees and the Province.

The City of Kingston's MCG had recently endorsed assisting the Town of Smiths Falls in its efforts as a host community to northern evacuees that could result from potential flooding in the James Bay region. The Gallepeau Centre in the Town of Smiths Falls had been made ready to accept evacuees. Although, the Town of Smith Falls has recently been advised by EMO that it no longer needed to be on standby, this facility can be readied again in short order if required.

This report provides context and seeks Council's approval to participate in a regional approach of assisting a host community as being the primary manner of supporting northern evacuation efforts particularly in relation flooding and forest fires and in addition, approval for the City of Kingston to receive up to two hundred Stage 1 evacuees for a short term, if conditions warrant it.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** City Council approve supporting any municipality in southeastern Ontario who enters into agreements with either the federal and/or provincial governments to be a host community for evacuees; and

**THAT** if additional capacity is required and a further request to host evacuees is made, the City of Kingston will consider being a potential short term host community to receive up to two hundred Stage 1 evacuees.

**AUTHORIZING SIGNATURES:**

<p><u>ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER</u>                  Denis Leger, Commissioner Transportation, Properties &amp; Emergency Services</p>
<p><u>ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER</u>                  Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer</p>

**CONSULTATION WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMISSIONERS:**

Cynthia Beach, <i>Sustainability &amp; Growth</i>	√
Lanie Hurdle, <i>Community Services</i>	√
Jim Keech, <i>President and CEO, Utilities Kingston</i>	√

***(N/R indicates consultation not required)***

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**OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:**Background/context

In recent years as a result of forest fires or floods, northern residents have been evacuated to communities across Ontario.

The Province of Ontario has taken preliminary steps to prepare for the possibility of northern evacuations and has been working with municipalities to identify potential host communities for Stage 1 evacuees. The Province identifies Stage 1 evacuees as being vulnerable populations. This includes persons with disabilities, elders, children and those with medical conditions. Stage 2 evacuees are all the remaining residents of the community.

This spring, the Province has monitored the potential flooding situation in the James Bay region in the event that some communities in the far north needed to be evacuated and transported to host communities elsewhere in Ontario. Evacuations of these and other remote northern communities take place on an almost seasonal basis, with flooding typically occurring in the spring, and forest fires usually during the summer months. Hosting evacuees from northern communities requires services provision and coordination over and above what is typically provided to non-northern communities. Residents of these evacuated remote communities often have many unique, cultural, spiritual, and other special circumstances that need to be respectfully and appropriately accommodated by all host communities.

Coordination and authority

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources is the lead agency, under Order-in-Council 1157/2009, for floods and forest fires in the far north of Ontario. Northern evacuations often involve a multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional response as outlined within the Ontario Mass Evacuation Plan Part1: Far North.

The financial authority for First Nation evacuations rests with the Government of Canada with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). Service Level Evacuation Standards establish services that are eligible for cost recovery and specify the level of compensation to which host communities are entitled.

Depending on the scale and complexity of the evacuations required, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC), and other relevant ministry, community and NGO emergency operations centre may be activated. It would be standard protocol for any host community to declare an emergency in advance of the arrival of evacuees, and to activate its municipal Emergency Operations Centre.

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#### A) Host community requirements

Host communities are required to sign a legal agreement to be a host community and provide a wide range of services to evacuees during their residency. These services may be provided by the municipality itself, or by other agencies contracted by the municipality. Host communities provide temporary accommodations, support, and services including logistics, health/medical, security, emergency social services, and other services. The Joint Emergency Management Steering Committee (JEMS) Service Level Evacuation Standards define the standard of care to be provided by host communities and the specific levels of compensation to which host communities are entitled.

#### Potential impacts and considerations for potential host communities

The City's Municipal Control Group (MCG) has been made aware of and its Emergency Management Program Committee (EMPC) has reviewed the service level standards and provincial evacuation planning expectations. Frontenac County EMS and Kingston General Hospital have also been included in the preparations and have provided their input.

The Federal Government through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is responsible for the remuneration of all eligible provincial and municipal costs arising from activities associated with First Nation evacuations. The Host Community Funding Agreement allows for reimbursement of eligible expenses incurred by municipalities that act as host communities for evacuees. All claims for reimbursement must be submitted to Emergency Management Ontario within ninety (90) days of the last expenditure that is incurred by the host community in relation to the emergency event.

#### Potential Impacts for the City of Kingston

Hosting a vulnerable population from another community demands the full attention of any host community on a 24 hour a day basis. Most City services are not fully staffed to operate on a 24/7 basis. Hosting vulnerable populations necessitates an enhanced level of policing and security as well as potential impact on local medical and health care services.

Staff from many departments would be needed to provide the level of oversight, coordination, and comprehensive service delivery outlined in the JEMS services level standards. As well, the City would call upon other community based agencies with which it has agreements to provide support during emergencies. While senior staff would make every effort to minimize the disruption to City services, clients, and residents, nevertheless, service delivery will be impacted in some areas. It should be noted that the City would only be able to host evacuees and maintain a certain level of service for residents on a short term basis.

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**B) Supporting other host communities in Southeastern Ontario**

The Gallipeau Centre in the Town Of Smiths Fall is a facility, whose size and suitability make it a very viable location to be used as an evacuation centre. In 2011, the Town of Smiths Falls and the County of Lanark very successfully hosted approximately 660 northern evacuees from northwestern Ontario forest fires at this centre.

The City of Kingston's Office of Emergency Management and Community Services staff have recently toured the facility and had preliminary discussions about potential support the City of Kingston may be able to provide, pending Council direction. The Town of Smiths Falls was very open to receiving an official offer of support from the City of Kingston. Subsequently, on March 26, 2012, the Town of Smith Falls provided official correspondence formally requesting the City of Kingston's assistance. The letter is attached as Exhibit "A". Based on our preliminary discussions, the City of Kingston appears to be well positioned to provide some direct staff and other support to emergency evacuation centre operations in the Town of Smiths Falls. Taking a regional approach enables municipalities to pool and share resources and provide greater service levels to evacuees. In the event the Province of Ontario requires another host community in southeastern Ontario, the City of Kingston is well positioned to review such requests on a case by case basis.

In the situation where we are supporting another host community, our understanding is that all expenditures incurred with respect to providing those support services would be accumulated and a claim made to the host community for reimbursement as part of that host community's claim submission to the Province. It is anticipated that the city would need to enter into an agreement with the host community to confirm the details of cost reimbursement activities and processes.

**Legal Considerations**

In agreeing to be a Host Municipality the principal legal considerations are firstly the potential that some costs incurred by the City would not be reimbursed by the other levels of government and secondly, liability considerations.

There have been evacuations in the past where some host municipalities have not been fully reimbursed by the other levels of government and because of that have been hesitant or have refused to act as host municipalities for subsequent evacuations. At least one municipality sued the other levels of government for unpaid expenses. On the other hand, the Town of Smiths Falls had a positive experience last year, and the Province of Ontario appears to be taking steps to address recommendations from previous evacuations.

The form of funding agreement that municipalities were required to enter into the past required that they indemnify the federal government against all claims, liabilities and demands arising directly or indirectly as a host municipality. That was of significant concern. Earlier this year the Province circulated a discussion draft of a funding agreement that once finalized, is understood

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would replace the federal agreement used in the past and which does not require host municipalities to indemnify either the province or the federal government. If that is the form of agreement that is entered into, it will go a long way in addressing municipal concerns about indemnification. Municipalities would remain contractually responsible for any damages to facilities that they own, lease or rent for the purpose of sheltering evacuees.

**EXISTING POLICY/BY LAW:**

Emergency Management & Civil Protection Act.

**NOTICE PROVISIONS:** N/A**ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:**

Stage 1 Evacuees by definition include the elderly and individuals with special needs. Host communities must have the ability to abide by and accommodate these accessibility considerations.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

In the event that the City agrees to become a host community or supports a host community, it would be imperative that all costs, including payroll related costs, are tracked separately from the city's day to day operating activities.

Cost tracking mechanisms currently exist and are identified within the City of Kingston's supplementary emergency plans. In the situation where we are supporting another host community, our understanding is that all expenditures incurred with respect to providing those support services would be accumulated and a claim made to the host community for reimbursement as part of that host community's claim submission to the Province.

There is the risk, particularly in an emergency situation that costs incurred during the emergency event will be subsequently denied for reimbursement. In the event that claims for reimbursement are denied, these costs would need to be absorbed by the city's operating budget or, depending on the scope, could require subsequent contingency funding approval by council.

**CONTACTS:**

John Cross, Manager, Emergency -Management  
Harold Tulk, Fire Chief

(613) 546-4291 Ext. 5207  
(613) 546-4291 Ext. 5203

**OTHER CITY OF KINGSTON STAFF CONSULTED:**

The City of Kingston's Municipal Control Group (MCG)  
The City of Kingston's Emergency Management Program Committee (EMPC)  
The City of Kingston's Municipal Support & Advisory Team (MSAT)

**EXHIBITS ATTACHED:**

Exhibit A – Letter from the Town of Smith Falls

*Sensational!*

EXHIBIT A



March 26, 2012

Mr. Gerald Hunt, CAO  
The City of Kingston  
City Hall  
216 Ontario Street  
Kingston, ON K7L 2Z3  
CANADA

Dear Mr. Hunt

**Re: Request for Assistance**

The Town of Smiths Falls hereby requests the assistance of the City of Kingston, to assist with the care and housing of the evacuees from Northern Ontario during the spring flooding season and potentially during the summer forest fire season.

Our neighbours from Northern Ontario appreciate any assistance you can provide them during these difficult times for them. Please do not hesitate to contact either of the undersigned should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours truly,

Dennis Staples  
Mayor

Wayne Brown  
CAO/Treasurer

/lmck