



AGENDA

**Committee of the Whole
to be held on April 5, 2022 at 3:00 p.m.**

977 South Maquinna Drive in Council Chambers and by electronic means

Remote Access

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Call to Order

Mayor Davis will acknowledge and respect that we are meeting upon Mowachaht/Muchalaht territory.

Introduction of Late Items

None.

Approval of the Agenda

- New Business** **M 1** **After-Action Report for the Village of Tahsis- Re: Extreme Winter Weather Rural Communities Transportation/ Utilities Prolonged Disruption Event.**

Adjournment



**Extreme Winter Weather Rural Communities
Transportation / Utilities Prolonged Disruption Event**

**After-Action Report
for the Village of Tahsis**

Provided by:

Sybille Sanderson Collaborative Consulting

March 22, 2022

Executive Summary

The purpose of this After-Action Report is to provide a review of the “Extreme Winter Weather Rural Communities Transportation / Utilities Prolonged Disruption Event” that occurred between January 2nd to 9th, 2022 inclusive. This report is meant for Village of Tahsis staff, Mayor and Council and volunteers directly involved in the event response and is designed to share the findings of the personnel survey, staff and volunteer debriefings, along with a few concerns identified from the resident survey so that the Village of Tahsis can identify some opportunities for future improvement.

Although other communities were negatively impacted by this winter weather, this sub-report is focussed on the Village of Tahsis. All the staff, volunteers, individuals, agencies, organizations, and businesses who worked tirelessly to assist these communities are to be very highly commended and should be recognized collectively and individually for going above and beyond the call of duty!

Many organizations and levels of government collaborated to provide support including the Strathcona Regional District which activated its Regional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to help coordinate the needs of these remote and isolated communities. Daily coordination calls with neighbouring communities, helped to identify what the communities needed and then EOC personnel worked together with Canadian Coast Guard, Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC), First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS), Indigenous Services Canada, Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council, and many others to provide resources.

One caution that has been identified is that anytime an individual, business, local authority or agency goes above and beyond the call of duty, there is the potential for this to reset expectations even higher for future events and this can become unsustainable. It would be very beneficial for the Village of Tahsis to discuss with stakeholders and service providers what type and level of emergency response is sustainable for the community and where public education and messaging needs to identify the shared responsibilities of individuals, families and the agencies that regularly support them.

This After-Action Report summarizes the event, the successes (which were many), the challenges, the feedback of those assisting as well as those being assisted, and recommendations for consideration that are based on current best practices and lessons learned.

A broader After-Action Report is being prepared for the Strathcona Regional District which will include a more regional perspective of the successes, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations. The resident survey results will also be prepared into a “What We Heard” Report summarizing the experiences of residents and potential solutions being considered that can be shared more broadly with the public.

It is the hope of the author that this After-Action Report provides a useful tool for each community to identify specific ideas and processes that they can implement locally and thereby become better equipped and prepared for future emergency events.

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Introduction

On, January 5, 2022, the Strathcona Regional District activated their Regional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to a level 1 in conjunction with the Village of Tahsis, Village of Zeballos, Ehattesaht/Chinehkint First Nation, Nuchatlaht First Nation and Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tles7et'h' First Nations to coordinate the continued provision of essential needs and life safety services during this unprecedented disruption of power and unsafe travel conditions due to the extreme winter weather.

In the Village of Tahsis a Warming Centre was quickly established to provide residents someplace to come, get meals, warm up and charge phones and for some even a place to sleep. Food, medications, and fuel provisions were brought into community through various means including trucks and barges.

A huge thank you to all the staff and volunteers who went above and beyond the call of duty to assist residents and help to keep everyone safe.

Methodology

Following the event, six separate debriefings were held with responders including:

- Village office and Public Works staff
- Canadian Coast Guard
- BC Ambulance
- Fire Department, and
- Warming Centre volunteers

These findings were summarized in a Debriefing Report (see appendix).

The Strathcona Regional District also hosted two additional surveys, one for responders and one for residents. These responses have also been summarized and provided for the larger regional After-Action Report with some specific to Tahsis findings included in this report.

The event summary provides a review of all information provided during the debriefings and the responder survey. Where concerns regarding Village response were expressed from the residents, this has been included as well. The sections of the event summary are divided into a brief chronology, the response successes, the response challenges and some opportunities suggested by the responders.

The Recommendations are based on concerns raised regarding the response and best practices in Emergency Management and are provided as suggestions for future consideration.

Event Summary

This event summary provides a review of all information provided during the debriefings, the responder survey, and information from the resident survey that raised concerns regarding to Village response. The debriefing and survey results are summarized here and are divided into the following sections:

- Brief Chronology
- Successes
- Challenges
- Opportunities

Brief Chronology:

- Shorter power outages on January 2nd and 3rd.
- Power went out around 1:30 am on January 4th and remained off until January 9th when power was restored.
- Brief power outages are experienced several times per year and residents are generally prepared for these.
- Additional challenges caused by significant snowfall, downed trees on roads and power lines and icy road conditions causing multiple accidents. Mainroad is responsible for maintenance of the Head Bay FSR and had a hard time keeping the Head Bay FSR cleared due to highway and other major road priorities and equipment failure.
- Brief collaboration call on January 4th with Strathcona Regional District (SRD).
- On January 5th the SRD activated their Regional Emergency Operations Centre and with EMBC sought to collaborate with the impacted communities including: Village of Zeballos and Village of Tahsis also impacted Ehattesaht/Chinehkint First Nation, Nuchatlaht First Nation and Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tlas7et'h' First Nations.
- Warming Centre was established at the Tahsis Recreation Centre but this soon turned into a traditional Group Lodging with vulnerable residents being brought in by BCEHS as well as showing up on their own to receive some meals plus some stayed overnight as well.



Photo courtesy of BC Hydro.

Successes:

- Community Cupboard (the local food bank supported by the St. Vincent de Paul Society) was quickly able to provide supplies for Warming Centre including hot beverages and basic meal supplies.
- Food donations came in from residents as their food started to thaw in freezers without power and these were used to feed residents at the Warming Centre.
- The emergency generator allowed the opening of a Warming Centre for residents.
- Staff and volunteers were very good at seeing immediate needs and responding to take care of them.
- Receiving delivery of additional meat and fresh vegetables and fruits coordinated by Strathcona Regional District was very helpful in providing nourishing meals for the residents. (Note that there is enough frozen food left over to provide 3 days worth of meals should this be needed again).
- Public Works staff worked long hours to ensure water and sewer pump stations worked and assisted with resource distribution.



Photo courtesy of SRD

Challenges:

- Village office staff were challenged to try to balance the needs of the EOC/Community and the regular workload including reception answering the phones effectively.
- Warming Centre turned into more of a Reception Centre/Group Lodging and provided many meals and distributed many donations. Concerns were raised that this may have created unrealistic expectations that every time there is a longer power outage, meals and donations will be provided.
- During some previous power outages, the fire department used fire truck generators to provide time limited power to local homes to run freezers (some thought this did not occur this time while others believe it did, creating some frustration among residents).
- Fuel shortages and road closures complicated the situation a great deal!
- The seacans are a great resource but some of the responders were unaware of what was in the seacans and how and when these should be utilized.
- Concerns were raised regarding numerous residents who did not access the services (how do we identify the needs of vulnerable populations, and find ways to fill those?)
- Mental Health is a long-standing Community Issue that needs to be addressed through other resources. The following issues increased the challenges of responders:
 - Depression escalated.
 - Isolation already challenged by COVID restrictions challenged the residents even further.
 - Alcohol/Drug Abuse is quite common, and issues of withdrawal became a big challenge for some in this situation.
 - Some responders found that after 3 days without power, mental health issues increased with thefts (i.e., fuel, generators and wood), serious intoxications and accidents (i.e., falling in the ditch resulting in injuries).



Photo courtesy of BC Hydro

Opportunities:

- Consider tying emergency preparedness sessions for the public with “build your own emergency kit” stations (ideally supplies are provided through grant funding and/or donations) to combat the financial challenges of some residents.
- Consider creating neighbourhood pods within each community to help support each other rather than expecting the Village to be responsible for everyone. Find ways to support regular check-ins by residents with nearby neighbours, especially those more vulnerable.
- Consider bringing in Emotional Support (i.e., Disaster Psychosocial Services) to give responders and residents an opportunity to discuss concerns in a non-confrontational process during and after the event.

Recommendations

The Recommendations provided in this report are based on concerns raised regarding the response, lessons learned and best practices in the broader Emergency Management community and are provided as suggestions for future consideration. The Village of Tahsis is encouraged to review both the recommendations and their own emergency management plans to confirm what is already in place, what may need improvement and what could benefit from further development, training and practice throughout the organization and the community to ensure that everyone understands the emergency plans and processes so that they can effectively work together in future emergencies.

- One of the great lessons learned was how valuable it was to have a coordinated regional response to the extensive power outage and road closure that impacted these five communities (Village of Zeballos, Village of Tahsis, Ehattesaht/Chinehkint First Nation, Nuchatlaht First Nation and Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations) and coordination efforts should be inclusive! It would be very beneficial to incorporate this process into future events and have some discussions to identify appropriate trigger points for activation (i.e., weather events causing isolation of more than 24/48/72 hours?)
- Some great connections are already being fostered through the Strathcona Regional District's regional approach to emergency management. Some of the feedback received identified that coordination information was not always getting to the frontline responders so developing a process or checklist for ensuring that responders (staff and volunteers) are briefed daily with updates, especially regarding what services to provide or how to distribute supplies brought into community would be very helpful.
- Review of existing Emergency Plans to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated. Suggestions are to consider:
 - Including all agencies that can assist so that the local Emergency Program identifies the many roles, responsibilities, and assistance everyone can provide.
 - Developing roles & responsibilities with ways to delegate processes to resident volunteers.
 - Including external and internal communication processes to ensure that no one is left not knowing what is going on.
 - Developing an ESS Plan to help identify roles, responsibilities, and realistic expectations for everyone. This can become a useful coordination tool when community volunteers offer to volunteer.

- Developing training and exercise programs suitable to the issues experienced within this sub-region and whether together or separate, providing a framework for building community capacity.
- Review and/or develop Local Government and agency business continuity plans. It has been confirmed that the Village of Tahsis has a business continuity plan which is wonderful. After an emergency is a great time to review and incorporate lessons learned and train/exercise the business continuity plan with all staff to build awareness of the program and capacity for staff to implement the plan as needed.
- Connect Rocket is a great tool for notification. After an emergency is a great opportunity to promote staff, volunteers and residents to so that they received critical messaging and increase awareness regarding challenges, events and impacts so that ideally everyone can become better prepared and thereby become more resilient.
 - Consider planning for other ways for communicating with community (i.e., when power is out, many have no phone, no internet, etc.)
- In Tahsis, the Warming Centre quickly evolved into Reception/Group Lodging Centre providing meals and sleeping accommodation as needed due to community isolation. Is this ESS service sustainable? If so, working with EMBC to clearly delineate the trigger point for escalating ESS services would be very helpful. Once defined, it would be important to share with residents to encourage realistic expectations for assistance during emergencies.
- Given the mental health concerns raised in the community, it might be worthwhile to work with Island Health (VHIHA) to develop some mental health supports for community such as.
 - Developing a Peer Support program for communities.
 - Finding ways to promote self-care and posting those around community.
- Regional coordination resulted in a wonderful challenge, namely how do we effectively and appropriately manage the resources (donations and supplies) made available to the community. Some suggestions for consideration include:
 - Developing a Resource Management process for donation and supply distribution to ensure that those who need the resources get them and promote understanding of how/when resources will be distributed to support a sense of fairness.
 - Developing a needs assessment questionnaire to help determine how best to use limited resources wisely and fairly.
 - Developing a program for sharing of generators specifically for supporting community members with a few hours per day of power to prevent loss of food and cooking ability.
 - Consider developing additional fuel storage capacity for times of extended isolation.
- Consider identifying a staff position with the right skillset to include the Emergency Management function as part of their portfolio so that they can collaborate effectively with staff, have a budget to work with and the authority to represent the local government with Emergency Management BC.
 - Continue working with the SRD to promote volunteerism within community. Having an ESS Plan might help to bring “walk-in volunteers” up to speed quickly to take on ESS roles in support of community in future emergencies. A request could be made to EMBC to request ESS support to community for just-in-time training and support.

- When an EOC is activated, consider requesting an experienced Emergency Program Coordinator from another community to come in to provide mentorship and build local capacity.
- During the debriefings it was mentioned that there may be other agencies that could provide services in an emergency. It might be good to identify all potential agencies and businesses in the village that could potentially assist in the future.
- Some residents expressed concern that they did not know what to do should there be a tsunami notification during situations where evacuation is limited. Perhaps consider developing an information package for new residents that includes this type of information. Occasional “high-ground” hikes might help residents practice and become more comfortable with this process.

Conclusion

Staff and volunteers within the Village of Tahsis did an excellent job and went above and beyond the call of duty to collaborate and coordinate the many needs of the community and residents. Everyone is to be highly commended for the time and effort provided!

Every emergency event provides us with an opportunity to review and learn what worked and what could use some improvement. The length and complexity of this event with power outages, road closures, massive snowfalls and a false tsunami alert combined to create a great deal of stress for individuals, businesses, agencies, and communities.

Taking time to review the lessons learned and the recommendations to determine what could be implemented in the short-term, mid-term and long-term helps to rebuild hope and ensure that improvement, even in small increments moves the community forward to a more sustainable and resilient future.

Appendix I - Village of Tahsis Debriefing – February 2022

Six individual and group debriefings were completed. These include:

Bruce Campbell (CCG); Shelley DeBruyne, Amanda Knibbs, Lauren Roth, Janet St. Denis (Village Office); Greg Feser, Curtis Rutherford, Erv Spencer, Bill Van Solkema, Jim Pichota & Michelle Harrod (Public Works); Lisa Illes (Fire Chief/Emergency Program Coordinator); Virginia Mountan (BCEHS) and Sue MacDonald-Simcox (ESS Director).

Brief Chronology:

- Shorter power outages on January 2nd and 3rd.
- Power went out around 1:30 am on January 4th and remained off until late on January 9th when power was restored.
- Power outages are experienced 3-5 times per year and residents are generally prepared for these.
- Additional challenges caused by significant snowfall, downed trees on roads and power lines and icy road conditions causing multiple accidents. Mainroad is responsible for maintenance of the Head Bay FSR and had a hard time keeping the Head Bay FSR cleared due to highway and other major road priorities and equipment failure.
- Brief collaboration call on January 4th with Strathcona Regional District (SRD).
- On January 5th the SRD activated their Regional Emergency Operations Centre and with EMBC sought to collaborate with the impacted communities including: Village of Zeballos and Village of Tahsis also impacted Ehattesaht/Chinehkint First Nation, Nuchatlaht First Nation and Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tles7et'h' First Nations.
- Warming Centre was established at the Tahsis Recreation Centre but this soon turned into a full-blown Group Lodging with vulnerable residents being brought in by BCEHS as well as showing up on their own to receive some meals plus some stayed overnight as well.

Successes:

- Community Cupboard (the local food bank supported by the St. Vincent de Paul Society) was quickly able to provide supplies for Warming Centre including hot beverages and basic meal supplies.
- Food donations came in from residents as their food started to thaw in freezers without power and these were used to feed residents at the Warming Centre.
- The emergency generator allowed the opening of a Warming Centre for residents.
- Staff and volunteers were very good at seeing immediate needs and responding to take care of them.
- Receiving delivery of additional meat and fresh vegetables and fruits coordinated by Strathcona Regional District was very helpful in providing nourishing meals for the residents. (Note that there are enough frozen food left over to provide 3 days worth of meals should this be needed again).
- Public Works staff worked long hours to ensure water and sewer pump stations worked and assisted with resource distribution.

Challenges:

- Village office staff were challenged to try to balance the needs of the EOC/Community and the regular workload including reception answering the phones effectively.
- Warming Centre lacked volunteers so those that were there to assist became overworked.
- Warming Centre turned into more of a Reception Centre/Group Lodging and provided many meals and distributed many donations. Concerns were raised that this may have created unrealistic expectations that every time there is a longer power outage, meals and donations will be provided.
- Many frozen pipes in private homes and businesses created additional challenges.
- Food loss among residents was huge!
- Some residents did not receive support obtaining medications.
- Tsunami Alert mistake messaging did not reach all residents, so some were concerned about needing to evacuate and were not sure how to proceed. This created additional stress for some residents.
- The slow progression of this event (including several smaller outages in previous days) resulted in some residents and businesses not recognizing that this was a major power outage and road closure until it was too late to leave the community or get additional supplies. As a result, some were less prepared than they might have been.
- During some previous power outages, the fire department used fire truck generators to provide time limited power to local homes to run freezers (some thought this did not occur this time while others believe it did, creating some frustration among residents).
- Fuel shortages and road closures complicated the situation a great deal!
- The seacans are a great resource but some of the responders were unaware of what was in the seacans and how and when these should be utilized.
- Concerns were raised regarding numerous residents who did not access the services (how do we identify the needs of vulnerable populations, and find ways to fill those?)
- Fire Department responded to numerous small fires and medical assists in addition to trying to provide general support to the community during this emergency event.
- Generator at Public Works building can only run lights & coffee pot for four hours before needing to be refilled which is insufficient support for staff working long hours during an emergency.
- Staff and volunteers were challenged trying to meet the needs of family and community simultaneously.
- Lack of working toilets and shower facilities in some residences and businesses.
- Mental Health is a long-standing Community Issue that needs to be addressed through other resources. The following issues increased the challenges of responders:
 - Depression escalated.
 - Isolation already challenged by COVID restrictions challenged the residents even further.

- Alcohol/Drug Abuse is quite common, and issues of withdrawal became a big challenge for some in this situation.
- Some responders found that after 3 days without power, mental health issues increased with thefts (i.e., fuel, generators and wood), serious intoxications and accidents (i.e., falling in the ditch resulting in injuries).

Opportunities:

- Consider tying emergency preparedness sessions for the public with “build your own emergency kit” stations (ideally supplies are provided through grant funding and/or donations) to combat the financial challenges of some residents.
 - Use the opportunity to set up a community map to help identify vulnerable populations to focus wellness checks on.
 - OK/HELP signs for residents to help signal the need for help as COVID prevented folks from reaching out and accessing services.
- Consider creating neighbourhood pods within each community to help support each other rather than expecting the Village to be responsible for everyone. Find ways to support regular check-ins by residents with nearby neighbours, especially those more vulnerable.
- Canadian Coast Guard has flexibility to assist in community as needed (some resources include certified engineers, paramedics, firefighters and numerous tools and equipment that can be used to assist in an emergency). Need to build more cohesive relationship and identify how best to utilize CCG in various types of events.
- Consider bringing in Emotional Support (i.e., Disaster Psychosocial Services) to give responders and residents an opportunity to discuss concerns in a non-confrontational process during and after the event.

Conclusion:

Staff and volunteers went above and beyond the call of duty serving the needs of community members. Every incident provides us the opportunity to identify our successes and areas needing improvement. The Village of Tahsis is to be commended for making the effort to provide input into the After-Action process of which Debriefing is one aspect. The Village is encouraged to continue the great work completed to-date and continue to move forward to become even more resilient as climate change continues to bring longer and more severe weather events to impact community.

Appendix II - Village of Tahsis Financial Summary

The Village of Tahsis requested inclusion of a Financial Summary in the After-Action Report for the Strathcona Regional District Regional Emergency Operations Centre for Extreme Winter Weather Rural Communities Transportation / Utilities Prolonged Disruption Event.

As with many provincial government initiatives, there is extensive paperwork required to obtain funding and/or reimbursement. During this event, it was very beneficial for the Strathcona Regional District to coordinate the resource requests and expenditure authorizations on behalf of the impacted communities, and this is greatly appreciated. In order for the Village of Tahsis to gain a better understanding of what costs are and are not supported provincially, it is important for staff to become familiar with the *Financial Assistance for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs: A Guide for BC Local Authorities and First Nations - September 2005 (revised January 2008)* along with any future revisions and/or updates. This will assist the Village of Tahsis to understand what costs might be eligible and which costs the Village needs to prepare to support through existing funding.

During emergency events, regular discussions with the EMBC Regional Duty Manager and/or Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre are encouraged to gain a better understanding what may or may not be reimbursable. EMBC staff can also provide excellent guidance regarding resources and supports they can assist community with. In many cases, these discussions need formal processes such as submitting Resource Requests and/or Expenditure Authorization Forms to support requests for assistance. Encouraging Finance staff to become familiar with these forms and processes can be very beneficial.

Some potentially eligible response costs include:

- Backfilling positions to temporarily cover full-time staff coordinating emergency response
- Emergency Operations Centre (actual expenditures to support EOC function)
- Emergency Response measures such as:
 - Establishment, operation of communication facilities
 - Protecting health and sanitation facilities
- Emergency Support Services
- Mutual Aid Costs
 - Resources (personnel, equipment, materials) needed during response at site or site support to protect public safety
- Public Works
 - Emergency repairs to public works required to support response objectives
 - Service Contracts directly related to the response efforts
- Supplies from local government stores consumed in response
- Temporary Wages
 - Costs of backfilling a regular position with a temporary employee due to incident
- Volunteer Expenses attributable to the event
- Wages - Paid overtime costs and benefits

A full list of eligible response and recovery costs can be found in the *Financial Assistance for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs: A Guide for BC Local Authorities and First Nations - September 2005 (revised January 2008)*.

EMBC also has policies to address the changing landscape of emergency management that Local Governments need to become familiar with. These include but are not limited to:

- Policy 5.01 – Task Registration
- Policy 5.02 – Expense Reimbursement
- Policy 5.03 – Evacuee Living Assistance
- Policy 5.06 – Volunteer Expense Reimbursement and Allowance Rate

During the emergency, the Strathcona Regional District submitted several Expenditure Authorization Forms to Emergency Management BC on behalf of the impacted communities. The following Expenditure Authorization Form requests on behalf of the Village of Tahsis were approved by EMBC.

Approved Expenditure Authorizations (relevant to Tahsis specifically) from EMBC:

| EA# | Description | Start Time | End Time | Amount | Approved? | Supplier |
|-----|---|------------|----------|--|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Tahsis WC Fuel | 02-Jan | 02-Jan | \$100 | Yes | |
| 2 | Tahsis WC Fuel | 03-Jan | 03-Jan | \$300 | Yes | |
| 3 | Tahsis WC Fuel | 04-Jan | 04-Jan | \$300 | Yes | |
| 8 | Contractors for Tahsis Overnight WC, WC Food, WC Fuel | 05-Jan | 06-Jan | \$3,780 Contractors, \$1,380 Food, \$1800 Fuel | Yes | Superstore |
| 15 | Contractors for Tahsis Overnight WC, WC Food, WC Fuel | 08-Jan | 10-Jan | Contractors \$2,520 Food \$806 Fuel \$1,200 | Yes | Superstore |

The Village of Tahsis provided a detailed list of expenditures captured by the financial systems. Of the total costs, only \$17,116.04 were claimed for reimbursement, leaving \$10,176.36 (mostly regular wages) to be borne by the Village of Tahsis. This is because EMBC reimbursement is generally limited to overtime of existing staff and, on occasion, backfilling of regular positions if necessary. Unfortunately, this does not consider the countless hours of catchup that local government staff need to embark on once the emergency is over as there is often no other staff available to stay current with the regular workload that gets set aside during emergency response efforts. The following is a brief summary of the expenditures tracked by the Village of Tahsis and identifies what costs were submitted for reimbursement and which were not.

Tahsis Event Expenditure Tracking

| EVENT EXPENDITURE SUMMARY | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|----------|--------------------|
| STATUS | ST | OT | DT | Supplies | Cost |
| Total Costs | 327.50 | 224.75 | 40.00 | 9936.78 | \$29,774.93 |
| Claimed | 5.00 | 195.00 | 40.00 | 7454.24 | \$17,116.04 |
| Not Claimed | 432.50 | 61.75 | 16.00 | 2482.54 | \$10,176.36 |
| Additional Costs to Village | | | | | \$12,658.90 |

For supplies, GST is not claimable as it is rebated to local governments through other means. In addition, supplies and meals provided directly to residents outside of the warming centre are also not reimbursable.

Although it is hoped that all costs claimed for reimbursement will be fully reimbursed, sometimes there are issues that result in delays and potential reductions in reimbursements.

Some examples of issues that arose in other communities in the past include:

- Staff and volunteers not signing in and out on the daily Task Registration Forms
- No policy in place stating that exempt staff will be paid overtime during major events that require emergency response above and beyond what can reasonably be expected from staff (i.e., any overtime hours beyond 4 hours per day or 10 hours per week).
- Lack of proof of payment (i.e., copies of paystubs that show overtime was paid)
- Supply receipts do not clearly identify what eligible costs were incurred

The financial burdens from emergencies can create significant challenges, especially for smaller communities with already challenging financial struggles. Should any costs submitted for reimbursement be denied, please request an explanation and guidance for what needs to be done differently in the future to increase the potential for full reimbursement.

Financial Recommendations for Consideration:

1. It would be beneficial for Financial and Senior Management staff to review the EMBC financial guidelines and policies and perhaps together with the Strathcona Regional District develop any financial policies that would help to ensure the best opportunity for full reimbursement of eligible costs following an emergency event.
2. One best practice learned from other emergency events, is that when an emergency event arises where a Task Number is issued by EMBC, Finance staff sends out an immediate notification to all staff indicating the nature of the emergency event and reminds all staff to track all hours and supplies (purchased or used) that are specifically used for responding to the event.
3. It would be beneficial for Council to consider building a financial reserve or contingency into the Emergency Program function to allow for emergency event costs.
4. Given the remote nature of the Village of Tahsis and the resulting isolation from events such as this one, it would be good to try to work with similar communities (i.e. regionally or via the Union of BC Municipalities) to raise concerns regarding the need for effective emergency support for remote communities with significant vulnerable populations to ensure that those unable to take care of themselves for various reasons are looked after without significant financial burden to the community and taxpayers.

Financial Summary

The Village of Tahsis is a small, remote community with a significant vulnerable population that do not have the resources to take care of themselves during extended emergencies such as the January 3-9 power outage and road closure. The Village has a very small tax base and as a result, must keep the financial burden to a minimum and is not in a position to sustainably support repeated emergency events requiring extensive community support.

The Village of Tahsis, its staff and volunteers went above and beyond their means to assist the many vulnerable community members that were adversely impacted by this situation. The Village of Tahsis is to be highly commended for all the efforts made to sustain the community and meet the needs of the vulnerable population.

It would be very beneficial for Emergency Management BC, and the provincial government in general, to recognize that “one-size fits all” policies and regulations do not recognize the needs

of remote communities in British Columbia and that having to shelter-in-place without access to the outside world for an extended period of time can be just as harmful to the health and well-being of vulnerable residents, as being evacuated from your home due to emergencies. Additional resources and support need to be made available and the local governments that need to support these communities need to be more fully reimbursed for their actual costs so that the community can recover and not be impacted long-term from such an emergency event.

References:

Financial Assistance for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs: A Guide for BC Local Authorities and First Nations - September 2005 (revised January 2008) is located at:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/embc/dfa/financial_assistance_guide.pdf

EMBC Policies are located at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/emergency-management/policies?keyword=embc&keyword=policies>