

COUNCIL REPORT

To: Mayor and Council

From: Fire Department

Date: February 4, 2026

Subject: Mackenzie FireSmart Program

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receives this report for information.

BACKGROUND:

In 2003, following the devastating wildfire event in Kelowna, the provincial and federal governments began to develop wildfire resiliency initiatives, which eventually led to the creation and implementation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) in British Columbia. In 2005, the District of Mackenzie completed its first CWPP, which outlined foundational FireSmart work such as fuel treatments around the community and cross training between the Mackenzie Fire Rescue Department and the BC Wildfire Service.

In 2017, the District of Mackenzie conducted a significant update to its CWPP with the support from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and the McLeod Lake Mackenzie Community Forest (MLMCF). This update helped to identify priority wildfire risk reduction areas, guide mitigation strategies, and update emergency response planning. The plan was formally adopted by Council in July of 2018, and the Mackenzie Wildfire Advisory Committee (MWAC) was formed to support the implementation of mitigation efforts, community education, and to guide fuel-reduction initiatives on municipal and crown lands surrounding the townsite. The MWAC is led by the District of Mackenzie and the MLMCF.

In 2019, the Province of British Columbia announced the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) grant to support FireSmart activities through the UBCM. Since 2019, the District of Mackenzie has applied and been approved for almost \$1.4M (\$1,395,334) in grant funding under the CRI program and has expended over \$790,000 to date.

NOTEABLE PROJECTS

YEAR	Activity of Note
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>FireSmart Debris pickup for the community was provided for the first time by Public Works and has been conducted twice a year since 2019.</i>

2019 cont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15.2 hectares of land was treated in John Dahl Park and near the BC Hydro Morfee Substation.
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73.7 hectares of municipal land was assessed to determine if there was a need for fuel treatment and what areas were a priority.
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brushing was completed around critical infrastructure in town to reduce wildfire risk. • A Fuel treatment prescription was completed around the remaining untreated area in John Dahl Park. • A FireSmart Coordinator position was created and funded through the grant.
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP) was created to replace the previous CWPP.
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Full time FireSmart coordinator was hired. • Equipment was purchased for Phase 1 of the Community Structure Protection Unit.
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRI grant application was approved for \$583,651.97 • Equipment was purchased for Phase 2 of the Community Structure Protection Unit. • A FireSmart Demonstration project was completed near the tree crusher which treated 3.7 hectares. • The FireSmart Coordinator and Deputy Fire Chief attended the Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit in Prince George. • Staff onboarded the Home Partners Program for Residential FireSmart Assessments.
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment was purchased for Phase 3 of the Community Structure Protection Unit. • The FireSmart Coordinator attended the Wildfire Summit in Penticton. • The Home Partners program changed to the Wildfire Mitigation Program through FireSmart BC, providing an updated and more streamlined process for homeowners to receive their FireSmart Assessment. • 3 new Wildfire Mitigation Specialists were trained. • A Junior FireSmart Coordinator was hired as a summer student. • A FireSmart Rebate Program was launched for residential homeowners. • 57 home assessments were completed under the Wildfire Mitigation Program. • Fire Department members enhanced response capabilities with additional structure protection training through the BC Wildfire Service. • The FireSmart Coordinator was trained and recognized as a Wildfire Mitigation Program Instructor and instructed 2 courses in Prince George. There is currently only one other instructor north of Kamloops.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A FireSmart Fuel Treatment project was started in the Fall, which will treat 9.9 hectares of Municipal land. The project will be completed in 2026 when the snow melts.
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LOOKING FORWARD

On December 9, 2025, staff created a public survey to evaluate the FireSmart program in Mackenzie and to gain a better understanding of the program’s strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The survey was open for public comment from December 9th, 2025, to December 31, 2025 and was promoted across the District of Mackenzie website, social media platforms, and mail out flyers.

While the results of the public survey provided insight into how the program was perceived and what residents liked about the current program, it provided staff with valuable insight as to what residents would like to see moving forward and how we can shape the program to better suit the community’s needs.

What We heard	2026 Goals
<i>Results of the survey indicated that many of the respondents heard about the FireSmart Program on the District of Mackenzie website, Social Media pages, and through word of mouth.</i>	<i>Grow our online promotions and presence through Social Media platforms and the website to promote the program. Continue with Mailout Flyers to reach those that may not have access to technology or social media.</i>
<i>Most of the respondents have not attended a FireSmart Workshop or event in Mackenzie.</i>	<i>Host more FireSmart Workshops and community events.</i>
<i>Most of the respondents have completed some form of FireSmart activity around their home or yard.</i>	<i>Continue to promote FireSmart Activities and provide support with these recommendations.</i>
<i>Cost of completing the recommended FireSmart Activities was a prominent issue for residents.</i>	<i>Provide the FireSmart Rebate program to residents and look for additional opportunities to reduce the cost to homeowners.</i>

COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

Community and Social Development

- Our investment in the municipality's services and infrastructure, our commitment to principles of social equity and well-being, and our belief in the value of resident engagement, creates a healthy community in which everyone feels valued and enjoys a high quality of life.

Environmental Sustainability

- The way we operate has an impact on the environment. We are committed to integrating sustainability and Environmental, Social and Governance factors (ESG) into our decision making and business practices.

Strong Governance and Finances

- As the municipality's elected governing body, we serve all residents and businesses in the community. We engage residents and stakeholders on important issues and make our decisions through open and transparent processes. We are careful in our use of resources, mindful of the need to maintain programs and services, while also meeting the community's infrastructure needs.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Micaiah Taylor, Deputy Emergency Program & FireSmart Coordinator

Reviewed By: Corporate and Financial Services

Approved By: Chief Administrative Officer