

Mayor Nathan Pachal  
Langley City Hall  
20399 Douglas Crescent  
Langley, BC, V3A 4B3

May 6, 2024

Dear Mayor Pachal and Councilors:

### **Emergency Response, Disaster Liabilities in the City of Langley**

The Township of Langley has apparently notified the City that it wants to stop its partnership with the City of Langley and the Joint Emergency Program. (Langley Advance Times, February 9, 2023).

The City's 2024 budget indicates funding for emergency planning under "other protective services". Does this include such items for urban wildfires and earthquakes ?

With visual impacts of the earthquake in Turkey – Syria, there is a realism when an earthquake of similar magnitude will occur in the lower mainland. Damaging earthquakes can strike anytime and anyplace.

### **Question: Is the City of Langley Prepared ??**

Is the city's present and future infrastructure resilient to an earthquake disaster ? Building a resilient city is key to being proactive. Does the City have the capability to react quickly to an early warning ? Does the City have the capability to quickly re-build ? Empowering communities together with their residents to take ownership of their destinies is essential for building resilience against natural disasters. Avoid the BPS (bureaucratic paralysis syndrome).

I have identified some potential problems, solutions and funding which can be improved upon with additional input from interested parties and residents.

#### ***PROBLEMS***

- The Langley City Emergency Plan website needs to be reviewed as it does not show any disaster routes, disaster staging areas, response centres.
- Areas of clay which would have a profound impact upon liquefaction.
- Does the City have the necessary funding, infrastructure and response centres for disaster resiliency ?
- Residents will be on their own for 72 hours. Apartment / condo residents will be the hardest impacted (no toilets, running water, power etc). Can the City accommodate them ?
- Langley City historical landfill site could rupture during an earthquake.

## SOLUTIONS

- Grade Crescent is an essential east – west travel corridor. It could be designated as a city disaster critical response transportation corridor and be part of the lower mainland disaster response route network. This would be in conjunction with the City of Langley Emergency Program. At present, this program does not designate any disaster response routes or staging grounds. Note that 200 Street is a designated response street. This disaster route and the LEP are of the utmost importance for natural disasters such as the earthquake, which is due. Designate certain roads such as Grade Crescent with signage as a disaster route.
- Designate areas such as Timms and / or other such community places as a disaster staging area for the public for safety, accommodation and communications.
- Create and install signage at Timms with a QR code to inform the public about disaster and emergency situations. Integrate with school emergency plans.
- A geotechnical soil map of Langley City would be beneficial to determine areas of clay content in order to reduce the impact of liquefaction for new and existing structures, roads and power poles. Pipes in clay and sandy soils are more likely to break than pipes in damper environments. Clay soil breaks are usually related to bedding issues, while those in sandy soil are linked to the way the structures settle. When conducting the sewer and water upgrades and housing development(s) it would be prudent to note and map the soil overburden for the geotechnical map.
- Determine if any (hidden) fault lines occur under or near the city.
- Insure that the city has a budget for disaster relief (not indicated in the 2024 budget).
- Designate swimming pools (public and private) as potential water storage areas for fire suppression and potable water supply.
- Send out booklets / maps to each resident about staging areas, disaster routes, preparedness and put in library.

## FUNDING

- Does the city have the necessary setup for funding and grants from the provincial and federal governments (construed as funding revenue). Disaster costs can be overwhelming
- Does the latest BC government infrastructure funding to the City improve the necessary disaster preparedness ?
- Can any Translink funding be used for infrastructure preparedness such as sidewalks and bicycle lanes ?
- Can the city address the necessary earthquake liability insurance on a city wide policy for business and residents ?
- Would the City consider implementing a \$5.00 Disaster Preparedness Fee on homeowners to be paid on taxation day ? This would be used for signage, pamphlets, emergency supplies and kits for city and residents, training of volunteers and residents for first aid and such other items that could be identified. Taking care of yourself makes you more available to be there for other people. Basic skills, having backup plans, and knowing how to get to safety is healthy for everyone. Investments in social capital (neighbors helping neighbors) is just as important as investments in the built environment. Building social capital is a resilience investment that can be fostered at the City level.

I would be willing (within my capabilities) to volunteer for the City of Langley emergency program committee. Time to be proactive.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours truly,

*"Bruce Downing"*

Bruce Downing, MSc, PGeo, FGC, FEC(hon)

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