



*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **CITY CALLS STATE OF EMERGENCY DUE TO ESCALATING WATER BREAKS**

*Three Water Main Breaks Occurring Since 1:00 AM Saturday Morning*

**PRINCE RUPERT, DECEMBER 17th, 2022** – The City of Prince Rupert Council declared a State of Local Emergency due to an escalation of water main and water service breaks in the past week. Since 1:30 AM Saturday morning alone, the City has experienced three water main breaks, and multiple service breaks. In response to mounting concern around local capacity, Council held an emergency session at 4:00 pm on Saturday to call the State of Emergency.

“We don’t want to alarm the community, and are working to manage the situation as best we can to ensure continuity in our water service,” said Mayor Herb Pond. “Calling a State of Local Emergency allows the City to call in the additional capacity and resources required to manage this situation.”

The escalation of water main and water service breaks combined with the condition of the City’s water distribution system and increasingly colder temperatures forecast over the next 6 days presents a significant risk for additional water main breaks, and potential complications with water service delivery. Calling of the Local State of Emergency is a preparatory step to ensure that the City can respond to any additional water main and water service breaks during this time. To ensure adequate capacity is available if needed, the City is arranging for contractors to assist in the event our own crews are unable to respond to additional breaks, given City crews may be extended beyond their capacity.

Declaring a State of Local Emergency will also enable the City to call on help from the Provincial government and request financial assistance to assist in paying for extraordinary costs. The City has activated its Emergency Operations Centre and updates will be provided to the community as available.

Although the City is taking these steps to avoid disruptions in service, it is always recommended that community members have 4L of water per person in your household on hand as a part of emergency kits. The City is also requesting that community members run their taps at a slow drip to prevent freezing of the taps in your homes, as City resources will be stretched in responding to water shut off requests during this time.

The following Resolution was adopted at today's Council Meeting, identifying the policy that outlines the City's response to water system repair requirements:

Be it resolved,

- THAT Council direct staff to alert the public that the City is experiencing a significant number of water main breaks annually and there may be future breaks and complications in the delivery of potable water, and that the City is actively working on securing funding from other orders of government and other funding entities and prioritizing capital expenditures to address the condition of the water distribution system and will be undertaking design work and water main replacement as funding allows; and,
- THAT the City adopt, as policy the following: Given the City's budgetary, revenue, and manpower constraints, (1) the City's water infrastructure is inspected as a result of complaints of defects received from staff or the public; (2) when a notice of defect is received by the City, the matter is directed to the public works department; (3) and, repairs are carried out in accordance with a priority based approach on the severity of the defect, provided that if flooding or damage to property or a complaint from Northern Health are sustained as a result of a water system defect, then the repair work is scheduled immediately regardless of its priority;

## **BACKGROUND**

The City has been advocating for additional supports from both the Provincial and Federal governments, given the known condition of our infrastructure. Although significant investment has been made to replace the dam, there is much more investment also needed in our supply side due to the age and condition of pipes – assets which do not qualify for grants to cover capital replacements.

The City was able to call an emergency session today as per Section 127(4) of the Community Charter, which allows Councils to waive the advanced notice requirement for meetings in emergency circumstances, and with the unanimous support of Council.

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