



LUSH VALLEY

Institute for
Sustainable
Food Systems

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR FOOD SYSTEMS WITHIN EMERGENCY PLANNING:

AN INVESTIGATION FOR THE VILLAGE OF CUMBERLAND

Funded by BC Healthy Communities Plan H fund, in partnership
with The Village of Cumberland

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ABOUT US.

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The **Comox Valley Food Policy Council** (CVFPC) provides a forum for advocacy and policy development that works towards the creation of a food system that is ecologically sustainable, economically viable and socially just.

LUSH Valley supports the Comox Valley community to gain food-systems tools, engage in just and resilient local food systems, and receive equitable access to nourishing food

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research aims to advance the capacity of the Village of Cumberland to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies that impact the food supply chain and the food system. To achieve this, we researched and summarized a series of regionally-appropriate and actionable policy tools and provided recommendations that can be reviewed and pursued by the Village of Cumberland as well as other local governments looking to build capacity for emergency food planning. These policy tools include:

- 1** Pre-established Emergency Procurement Arrangements
- 2** Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Programs
- 3** Local Food Procurement Policy and Practice
- 4** Ecosystem Stewardship and Indigenous Food Sovereignty

In selecting these policy tools for research and discussion, we hope to illustrate a breadth of planning approaches that can collectively build food system resilience. We also provide recommendations specific to the Village of Cumberland for advancing each policy tool, as well as outline important collaborative approaches that can strengthen their implementation, efficacy, and the relationships that underpin regional resilience.



POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

The authors, of this report, Maurita Prato and Naomi Robert, have been living and working as uninvited guests on K'ómoks territories for over a decade, and for four years, respectively. While they have worked in partnership with several First Nations and Indigenous communities on food security and Indigenous food security projects over their careers, they do not speak for any Indigenous group or First Nation. This report showcases policy precedents and opportunities for the Village of Cumberland and the Comox Valley as a region to strengthen considerations of food in emergency planning. While a fulsome review of the planning and policy context for advancing Indigenous food sovereignty is outside the scope of this report, we recognize those working in this space and extend our gratitude for their ongoing efforts.

In this report, we hope to emphasize the importance of Indigenous food sovereignty and ecosystem stewardship. However any implementation of related policy will require leadership and engagement from K'ómoks Nation as well as other Indigenous and First Nations groups. We also recognize that the Village of Cumberland maintains relationships with First Nations and Indigenous communities and the existence of ongoing ecosystem stewardship and Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives. We hope that this can help strengthen these important initiatives.

CONTEXT

WHY STRENGTHEN FOOD CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN EMERGENCY PLANNING?

Vancouver Island, like many regions, relies on an increasingly globalized and complex supply chain to bring food into communities. There are several advantages to this system, including better access to fresh, out-of-season, and non-native foods, and economic efficiencies from increased specialization and consolidation. Importantly, “just-in-time” inventory management in the food systems can create efficiencies by aligning the delivery of goods as close as possible to when they are needed, thereby reducing storage costs, and potentially waste, from unused inventory. Despite these important advantages, there are increasing concerns with the resilience of just-in-time supply chains,^{1,2} and the preparedness of communities to respond to food supply chain emergencies. This is of particular interest in the context of a changing climate, where the severity and frequency of emergencies and disruptions are poor indicators of future disruptions.

Food is a known gap in emergency planning and governments across jurisdictions are increasingly recognizing the need to provide more attention to food within emergency planning. For example, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada recognized in a post Covid-19 pandemic audit that the government had no national emergency preparedness and response plan for Canada’s food system.³ Similarly, a 2020 UBCM motion⁴ requested that the Province provide greater consideration of food security and supply within provincial emergency management structures and additional guidance and resources for local governments and their emergency operation centres. This motion was brought forward by the Comox Valley Regional District in response to local pandemic-related food security challenges, where local governments, who were often positioned as first responders, had limited resources and preparedness to address food related challenges in their communities.

¹ Johnston, David. (2020). Schulich Webinar Series: Shaping the Post-Pandemic World.
<https://schulich.yorku.ca/covid-19-response/covid-19-webinar>

² Office of the Procurement Ombudsmen. (2020). Knowledge Deepening And Sharing: Emergency Procurement.
<https://opo-bao.gc.ca/documents/urgence-emergency-eng.pdf>

³ Office of the Auditor General of Canada. (2021). COVID-19 Pandemic Report 12: Protecting Canada's Food System.
https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_202112_01_e_43965.html

⁴ Union of B.C. Municipalities. (2020). Provincial Action to Enhance Food Security During Emergencies Number EB78.
<https://www.ubcm.ca/convention-resolutions/resolutions/resolutions-database/provincial-action-enhance-food-security>

Several recent local disruptive events have also sparked interest in strengthening emergency planning around food:

- In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions to many food access programs such as in-school food and charity-based community food programming, increasing the pressure on local emergency management systems;
- In 2021, extreme precipitation, flooding and landslides in South Coastal B.C. temporarily cut all major highways connecting Metro Vancouver, the Port of Vancouver and the Fraser Valley –primary hubs for food distribution for Vancouver Island and B.C. more broadly – as well as Highway 1, which severed the ground transportation between the North and South Island;⁵
- In 2023, the Cameron Bluffs wildfire closed Highway 4 for two weeks, the only major corridor connecting several communities on Vancouver Island's west coast to ground transportation. The B.C. Ministry of Transportation established a detour route between Port Alberni and Cowichan Lake using forest service and private industrial roads that extended the trip by four hours and included challenging driving conditions;
- Geopolitical instability, such as the war in Ukraine⁶ or the Trump administration's shift in U.S. trade policy,⁷ have had ripple effects throughout the global food supply chain. While these have been predominantly reflected in prices, they have been accompanied by concerns for the impacts and uncertainty for potential future disruption due to shifting political circumstances.

⁵ Sepúlveda, S. A., Ward, B. C., Cosman, S. B., & Jacobs, R. 2022. Preliminary investigations of ground failures triggered during the mid-November 2021 atmospheric river event along the southwestern British Columbia highway corridors. <https://doi.org/10.1139/cgj-2022-0093>

⁶ Jagtap, S., Trollman, H., Trollman, F., Garcia-Garcia, G., Parra-López, C., Duong, L., Martindale, W., MuneKata, P. E. S., Lorenzo, J. M., Hdaifeh, A., Hassoun, A., Salonitis, K., & Afy-Shararah, M. 2022. The Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Its Implications for the Global Food Supply Chains. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11142098>

⁷ Rutgers, J.-S. 2025. How a trade war could hurt farmers on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border. <https://thenarwhal.ca/manitoba-farmers-trump-tariffs>

EMERGING VULNERABILITIES FOR THE VANCOUVER ISLAND FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (ISFS) at Kwantlen Polytechnic University recently completed a quantitative study of food flows in B.C. at the provincial and regional district scales at the request of the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food.⁸ A case study for Vancouver Island provided additional information to understand the vulnerabilities and food flows for Island communities.

The results of this research are summarized here to provide relevant context for the emergency food planning and policy research provided in this report:

1. High dependence of the ferry system for bringing food into Island communities

Vancouver Island has low levels of food self-reliance and the vast majority of food is imported to the Island by the ferry system. Vancouver Island's food self-reliance is estimated at 12-15% (Table 1), meaning it produces enough food to meet 12-15% of local food needs.⁹ The upper range assumes that food surpluses in one regional district can satisfy demand in another, whereas the lower range bounds production and food consumption to each regional district. For comparison, the ISFS estimated that B.C. is 19-34% food self-reliant, with the remaining food needs met through imports.

When the data is separated by food product, fish and seafood is the only food category where provisioning exceeds local food needs. This implies that the Island theoretically could be self-sufficient in these products, if the products remained on the Island and were available to local consumers via local supply chains. Importantly, this represents a theoretical self-reliance, as much of the harvested seafood is exported from Vancouver Island while fish and seafood from other regions are simultaneously imported to the region.

Table 1
Food Self-Reliance (FSR) by Vancouver Island Regional District

Regional District	Regional self-reliance
Alberni-Clayoquot	6.5%
Capital	9.9%
Comox Valley	14.6%
Cowichan Valley	21.8%
Mount Waddington	3.9%
Nanaimo	12.6%
Strathcona	6.7%
Vancouver Island	11.8 (low) to 15.2 (high)

⁸ Kreitzman, M., Brynne, A., Tatebe, K., Davies, P., Robert, N., Vigneron, G., Polasub, W., and Mullinix, K. 2025. British Columbia's Food Supply Chain Analysis. Report prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems, FarmFolk CityFolk and Davies Transportation Consulting Inc for the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

⁹ This represents a theoretical for maximum food self-reliance with current production and consumption practices. In the absence of data for the quantity of food procured locally that is consumed, the analysis assumes that food produced locally is preferentially consumed locally and only surpluses leave the region.

2. Consolidating distribution networks in the Lower Mainland

ISFS estimated that 70% of major national grocery chain stores on Vancouver Island are owned by either Sobeys (e.g. Safeway, Thrifty Foods, IGA) or the Pattison Group (e.g. Save-on-Foods, Quality Food, etc.). ISFS interviewed representatives in the retail sector who estimated that retail outlets maintain approximately 48 hours of stock within their stores. While Sobeys maintains a distribution center on the Island, which supplies approximately 30% of Vancouver Island stores' stock, the overwhelming majority of grocery supplies rely on regular shipments from the Lower Mainland. Given these estimates, one could assume that ferry disruptions of more than 48 hours would begin to strain the retail food supply chain as in-store stocks would become increasingly depleted with minimal access to warehouses or distribution centres on the Island. Additionally, recent trends have increased dependence on centralized grocery distribution infrastructure in the Lower Mainland. For example, in 2023, the Pattison Group closed their on-Island distribution facilities and presently service Vancouver Island entirely from their Lower Mainland facilities. While consolidation can increase economic efficiencies, it also increases vulnerability for Vancouver Island in the event that the transportation network, particularly the ferries, is disrupted.

3. Increased chance of disturbance climate change & related extreme weather events

Researchers anticipate an uptick in food supply chain disturbances as climate change continues to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme events.¹⁰ The following table, adapted from the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems' food supply chain analysis for B.C.,¹¹ summarizes select climate indicators for Vancouver Island for extreme precipitation and extreme heat.¹²

Table 2

Summary of select Climdex indices for extreme precipitation and heat, adapted from Kreitzman et al, 2025.
Description of indices provided in Appendix B.

	Extreme Precipitation		Extreme Heat	
Index	PRCPTOT - Annual total precipitation in wet days (mm)	rx5day - maximum 5 day precipitation (mm)	tx90p - percentage of days when daily maximum temperature is above the 90th percentile (%)	WSDI - warm spell duration index (days)
Baseline	2716.98	91.82	12.58	12.06
2050's	2902.28	94.62	37.97	113.48
2080's	2997.82	95.43	57.39	214.7

¹⁰ Furtak, K., & Wolińska, A. 2023. The impact of extreme weather events as a consequence of climate change on the soil moisture and on the quality of the soil environment and agriculture – A review. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.catena.2023.107378>

¹¹ Kreitzman et. al., 2025.

¹² Indicators and data were selected from Climdex indices and Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium (PCIC). Climdex produces climate extremes indices using annual or monthly statistics of modelled or observed climate data. See Indices | Climdex. PCIC provides open access to downscaled climate model data. See https://services.pacificclimate.org/pcex/app/data/climo/ce_files

Climate projections anticipate an increasing number of hot days and prolonged periods of summer drought and wildfires. At the same time, increased precipitation in the winter months, particularly falling during extreme events, raise the risk of landslides and flooding. These conditions suggest an increased risk to ground shipping and supply routes, amplifying the need to strengthen emergency planning for food.

While outside the scope of this project, it should also be noted that climate change presents important challenges for agricultural production on Vancouver Island and beyond. Strengthening the regional food system, supporting agricultural climate adaptation and maintaining supply routes for food imports are all important avenues of emergency preparedness for food systems in a changing climate where both local and distant disruptions are more likely to occur.

FOOD POLICY LEADERSHIP AT THE VILLAGE OF CUMBERLAND

The Village of Cumberland has been a leader in food policy and supporting food programs in the community.

Urban agriculture is regulated in the Village's Zoning Bylaw (sections 4.13 and 4.14) this bylaw provides allowance of backyard hens, market gardens and keeping bees. The Village was the first of four municipalities in the CVRD to support these progressive urban agriculture policies.

Cumberland was active in the initiation of the Comox Valley Food Policy Council (CVFPC), becoming a member at the inaugural meeting in 2019. The Village Mayor and/or a Council member continue to be active members.

Cumberland has signed onto the Island Food Charter,¹³ committing to working towards the vision and goals. The Village has an active farmers market, and has been generous in prioritizing support for food security initiatives, with a current funding commitment to Cumberland Food Share until the end of 2026.

These and other initiatives show Cumberland's leadership in this area.

¹³ Island Health. Food Charter. <https://www.islandhealth.ca/sites/default/files/food-safety/documents/vancouver-island-food-charter.pdf>

APPROACH

This research used the following frameworks from emergency planning literature and practice to illustrate the breadth of emergency food planning and highlight holistic approaches to addressing food within an emergency planning context:

PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

B.C.'s new Emergency and Disaster Management Act came into effect in 2023. The new legislature emphasizes proactive approaches by integrating four phases of emergency management: prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.¹⁴ This research therefore includes a discussion of how the selected policy tools support, as applicable, emergency management goals across the four phases. The table below illustrates the related guiding questions:

Table 3

Phases of Emergency Management

Prevention	Preparedness	Response	Recovery
How might this policy tool support prevention of food emergencies?	How might this policy tool support preparedness for food emergencies?	How might this policy tool support responses to food emergencies?	How might this policy tool support recovery from food emergencies?
What are the key lessons learned from the implementation of this tool in other jurisdictions? How might this tool build capacity for emergency food planning in the Village of Cumberland?			

¹⁴ Government of British Columbia. 2025. Modernized emergency management legislation. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/emergency-management/legislation-and-regulations/modernizing-epa>

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Community resilience literature¹⁵¹⁶ identifies five dimensions of resilience that should be incorporated in planning practice. Emergency planning policy can support resilience in one or more of these community dimensions:

- Ecological: the living and non-living components and processes of the earth's ecosystems such as the local hydrological cycle, biodiversity, nutrient cycling, etc;
- Social: the relationships, or social capital in a community such as community connectedness, sense of belonging, capacity for mutual aid, local knowledge, culture, etc;
- Economic: the formal and informal material provisioning systems in a community such as businesses, supply chains, etc;
- Physical: the built environment including infrastructure, land use, etc.
- Institutional: the governance and policy landscape.

The policy tools explored throughout this project aim to illustrate how planning and policy can advance resilience across multiple community capacities, both tangible and relational.

The applied research process included the following steps:

1. Literature review focused on the local emergency food planning context and project scoping;
2. Meet with the Village of Cumberland and Comox Valley Emergency Management to prioritize policy tools featured in this project;
3. Research policy tool precedents in other local governments;
4. Interview local experts to understand how the policy tools were being applied in their jurisdiction and how tools can support the phases of emergency management;
5. Synthesize literature review and interviews to profile each policy tool, its application to the four phases of emergency management and provide recommendations;
6. "Right-size" the recommendations for the Village of Cumberland by understanding existing policies and practices, utilizing local knowledge and the historical work and relationship between the Village and the Comox Valley Food Policy Council.

¹⁵ Jorge Gomes Ribeiro, P., & António Pena Jardim Gonçalves, L. 2019. Urban resilience: A conceptual framework. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2019.101625>

¹⁶ Ostadtaghizad, A., Ardalan, A., Paton, D., Jabbari, H., & Khankeh, H. R. 2015. Community disaster resilience: a systematic review on assessment models and tools. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25905026>

POLICY TOOLS

DEFINITION OF “POLICY TOOL”

In this context “policy tool” describes any action taken by a government to advance the capacity of communities to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies that impact the food supply chain and food system. We’re proposing that the term encompass a breadth of actions including the development of plans, regulations, and guidelines, funding or other support for initiatives in a community, support for physical infrastructure, collaborations or novel approaches to governance, procurement procedures, etc.¹⁷

SUITE OF POLICY TOOLS

- 1** Pre-established Emergency Procurement Arrangements
- 2** Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Programs
- 3** Local Food Procurement Policy and Practice
- 4** Ecosystem Stewardship and Indigenous Food Sovereignty

¹⁷ For reference, similar use of the term “policy tool” or “policy precedent” exist in following research addressing food system policy issues in BC:

Tatebe, K., N. Robert, R. Liu, A. dela Rosa, E. Wirsching, and K. Mullinix. 2018. Protection is Not Enough: Policy Precedents to Increase the Agricultural Use of B.C.’s Farmland. Jorge Gomes Ribeiro, P., & António Pena Jardim Gonçalves, L. (2019). Urban resilience: A conceptual framework. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2019.101625>

Robert, N. Prioritizing Ecological Stewardship in Water Planning & Policy. 2021. Jorge Gomes Ribeiro, P., & António Pena Jardim Gonçalves, L. (2019). Urban resilience: A conceptual framework. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2019.101625>

Hansen, E. Managing Organic Waste and Improving Nutrient Cycling. 2021. Managing Organic Waste and Improving Nutrient Cycling. Jorge Gomes Ribeiro, P., & António Pena Jardim Gonçalves, L. 2019. Urban resilience: A conceptual framework. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2019.101625>

POLICY TOOL:

1

PRE-ESTABLISHED EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT ARRANGEMENTS

DESCRIPTION & CONTEXT

Pre-established procurement arrangements facilitate emergency food procurement by developing a mutual understanding of emergency procurement needs and capacity between procuring and supplying entities to expedite decision-making during an emergency response. Arrangements can include formal agreements, such as standing offers and contracts that can be integrated into local authorities' emergency plans and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operations, as well as informal capacity-building and engagement work that can accelerate procurement in an emergency. Where feasible, local procurement has the potential to advance additional aspects of emergency management and provide co-benefits for communities.¹

Under the Emergency Program Act, local authorities have the responsibility of coordinating the provision of essential goods and services, including food, for affected communities. During an emergency situation, a local government may approach the provincial Emergency Support Services (ESS) program to collaborate with the Integrated Disaster Council of British Columbia (IDCBC). The IDCBC is a network of humanitarian service providers with expertise in a range of emergency services including food provisioning, lodging, sanitation, etc. Members include government and non-government organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross and the Salvation Army. However, depending on the severity and scope of the emergency, local governments can be best positioned to coordinate responses and engage in proactive initiatives to expedite food procurement.

For example, emergency response personnel at the District of Saanich recently reported challenges procuring food for ~200 people at a temporary lodging after an emergency evacuation. The relatively short notice and the size of the request exceeded capacity for many local food purveyors. District of Saanich personnel expressed how compiling and updating a list of potential food providers, understanding their capacity and developing a mutual understanding of emergency procurement procedures would have been beneficial. Similarly, during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, local government personnel from the District of Saanich expressed initial challenges supporting the EOC with appropriate food for an extended period of time. While ongoing food procurement was later established, personnel expressed that having pre-existing understanding of which provisioners might have capacity to support an ongoing EOC would have been beneficial. As such, the District is

¹ See policy tool 2. Local Food Procurement in this report.

currently interested in strengthening the inclusion of food within their emergency service providers by connecting to local food purveyors to understand their capacity to respond and establish relevant procedures.²

Given this context, this policy tool describes examples of how a local government can work with civil society actors and businesses to facilitate food procurement and distribution, particularly for small to medium scale emergencies, by preemptively establishing an understanding and/or agreements with local actors to expedite an emergency response. There are also opportunities to integrate pre-established food procurement arrangements into regional-scale emergency plans that coordinate local actors such as food banks, and local businesses and organizations working in community food access, to create coordinated emergency food plans that can be activated during emergency response.

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Institutional/governance: Pre-established agreements and arrangements provide guidance and options for food procurement that can expedite institutional decision-making by ensuring local governments can quickly and effectively identify appropriate food purveyors who are able to meet the needs and scale during emergency response.

Economic: Pre-established arrangements can choose to prioritize local foods and businesses, creating opportunities for local economic development.

² District of Saanich personnel indicated that this work is of interest, but not yet completed as of the publication of this report. As such, the District expressed interest in any advancement on pre-established emergency procurement policy and practice that the Village of Cumberland might pursue to inform their work in this policy area.

PRECEDENTS

City of Thunder Bay Emergency Food Plan

The Thunder Bay Emergency Food Plan³ acts as a complement to the City's emergency plan and establishes procedures, roles and responsibilities to coordinate a network of civil society actors to respond to emergency events that impact food access. The plan was developed in response to food access gaps and vulnerabilities revealed COVID-19 pandemic. This work resulted in a report, Learning from Emergency Food Response During COVID-19 in Thunder Bay, Ontario⁴ and subsequently led to the development of the emergency food plan. The purpose of the plan is to “address emerging food access challenges resulting from emergency events, especially for vulnerable populations, within the City of Thunder Bay.” The plan employs an incident command structure to articulate the procedures for activating, responding, deactivating, and stewarding the plan. Importantly, emergency plan partners include representatives from local government and local health authority, as well as civil society organizations with experience in food distribution and volunteer coordination and who have access to supportive infrastructure. In the case of an emergency event impacting food access in the community, the plan outlines a strategy for establishing a food branch command centre, coordinating a response with established partners, monitoring, and financial administration. For example, should the City experience an extreme weather event that compromises existing food access channels, the plan provides roles and responsibilities for activating an emergency meal service through organizations with existing knowledge and capacity for emergency food programming.

Framework Agreements for Emergency Procurement

Framework agreements are arrangements between suppliers and buyers to establish the terms and conditions for potential future procurement. Framework agreements are not legally binding contracts committing one party to purchase goods or services, but rather establish the conditions should the buyer decide to pursue the proposed procurement. Framework agreements can therefore expedite emergency procurement for goods, such as food, but require advance planning to develop, implement and maintain.

Framework agreements have been used by procuring entities at various scales, including government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as international emergency response organizations such as the Red Cross. At the provincial level, B.C. Emergency Support Services uses pre-established procurement arrangements, such as corporate supply arrangements, to establish procurement agreements for important goods and services for emergency responses including water acquisition and services, trucking logistics, security services, satellite phones, etc. While the content of these agreements

³ Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy. 2023. Emergency Food Plan for Thunder Bay. <https://tbfoodstrategy.com/emergencyfood>

⁴ Strutt, C. and Thunder Bay & Area Food Strategy. 2022. Learning from Emergency Food Response During COVID-19 in Thunder Bay, Ontario. https://tbfoodstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022_Learning_from_Emergency_Food_Response_During_COVID-19.pdf

varies by region, scope, and government, there are several important common terms that should be addressed, including:

- Conditions for activating the procurement agreement
- Pricing
- Quality standards
- Considerations for delivery and/or transportation
- Timing and method for payment
- Duration of agreement

Whether through formal framework agreements or more informal engagement, pre-emptively connecting with local food suppliers to develop mutual understanding of the above considerations can help expedite emergency food procurement.⁵

⁵ Resources for developing framework agreements include:

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2011. Brief 19 - Public Procurement: Framework Agreements. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2011/09/framework-agreements_g17a25f5/5js4vmnmnhf7-en.pdf

World Bank Group. 2021. Guidebook For Setting-Up And Operating Framework Agreements.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/958921624026529503/pdf/Guidebook-for-Setting-up-and-Operating-Framework-Agreements.pdf>

ALIGNMENT WITH B.C. EMERGENCY PLANNING FRAMEWORK**Preparedness**

Pre-established procurement arrangements ensure that both the local governments and potential suppliers have an understanding of emergency procurement needs and capacity. This can build emergency preparedness by ensuring local governments understand the capacity of potential food provisioners, including the number of people that can be provided for in a given timeframe, the type of food that can be provisioned, the dietary restrictions that can be accommodated, delivery and transport arrangements, pricing, payment procedures, etc. For suppliers, pre-established arrangements can ensure suppliers have an understanding of local governments needs and procedures including payment.

Response

Pre-established agreements and arrangements can increase the efficiency of emergency responses by establishing a mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local actors including local governments, civil society organizations and businesses to expedite decision-making and response times. For example, a post-disaster audit of Slave Lake Regional Wildfires in Alberta criticized province and local governments “for failing to have in place pre-established agreements with vendors that could be activated quickly to mobilize services and supplies.”⁶ Supporting local food businesses in the preparedness and response phase has been shown to shorten and provide a more successful recovery phase.

Recovery

Emergency events have shown that local businesses experience a higher risk of failure relative to internationally-owned and operated businesses. As such, integrating local procurement into pre-established arrangements for food procurement can support local economic recovery and development. For example, an audit of the response to the Great Slave Lake wildfire in Alberta in 2011 reported “a certain level of animosity from the community towards contractors from outside the region who were perceived to be taking advantage of the disaster. Some offered the opinion that fewer home suppliers could have been used, with a greater emphasis on local vendors.”⁷

⁶ KPMG. 2012. Lesser Slave Lake Regional Urban Interface Wildfire – Lessons Learned. <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/lesser-slave-lake-regional-urban-interface-wildfire-lessons-learned>

⁷ Ibid, pg 130.

IMPLEMENTATION

Recent emergency responses in B.C. have highlighted the following important considerations for integrating food procurement and distribution into emergency planning:

- Prioritizing planning for services for vulnerable populations:** Some community members are more vulnerable to food insecurity during emergency events, including people with disabilities, socially isolated & economically marginalised seniors, people who are insecurely housed, or living with substance use and mental health challenges. It is also important to recognize that many of these vulnerabilities are intersecting, requiring thoughtful planning and processes to ensure equitable access to emergency support services. For example, a 2022 report on lived experience of extreme heat in B.C. highlighted additional barriers faced by food bank clients who had to wait outside in the heat, often without shade, to access services, making access difficult for those with health challenges, particularly seniors.⁸
- Indigenous cultural safety:** A 2023 report by the B.C. Ombudsperson⁹ found particular barriers for equitable service access for Indigenous peoples and that provincial services and programs were often unprepared to meet the unique needs of Indigenous evacuees, who are “more likely to be disproportionately impacted by displacement as a result of climate change disasters.”¹⁰ The report conveyed that Indigenous people experienced discrimination or harassment when accessing services as well as challenges to accessing culturally appropriate food. Working with local partners, such as Indigenous planning officers, is critical to this work.¹¹ Of additional relevance is recent B.C.’s Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness policy for Cultural Activity Support Locations¹² to support culturally sensitive evacuee care, which can include access to traditional and culturally appropriate foods.
- Working with civil society partners with existing food distribution capacity:** Coordinating responses with local organizations who have place-based experience and infrastructure to support coordinated and streamlined responses. Additionally, these groups often maintain relationships with vulnerable populations and can support equitable service delivery and access for community members who are at a higher risk of falling through the cracks. For example, LUSH Valley Food Action Society supported

⁸ Lilia Yumagulova, Tira Okamoto, Erica Crawford & Kerri Klein. 2022. Lived Experience Of Extreme Heat In B.C. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/climate-change/adaptation/resources/lived_experience_of_extreme_heat_in_bc_final_report.pdf

⁹ Ombudsperson B.C. 2023. Fairness in a changing climate: Ensuring disaster supports are accessible, equitable and adaptable. https://bcombudsperson.ca/assets/media/OMB-FireFlood_report_web.pdf

¹⁰ Ibid, pg 3

¹¹ For example, Indigenous Planning Officer Alagamiit - Nicole Norris at B.C. Emergency Management Climate Readiness

¹² B.C. Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness. 2022. Policy 2.15 Cultural Activity Locations Support Procedures Document. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/embc/policies/215_embc_cultural_activites_location_support_cals_procedures.pdf

emergency management personnel by extending their Good Food Box program to support food access for vulnerable students and families after a cafeteria fire temporarily disrupted school food programming.

- **Integrating local procurement:** Where possible, local procurement can support local economic development and disaster recovery. Here, clear communications capacity, payment schedules and timely reimbursement are important for working with locally owned and operated businesses.

Village of Cumberland

The Canadian Office of Procurement recommends the following steps to strategically plan for procurement of essential goods and services during an emergency,¹³ as described in the UN Procurement Manual:¹⁴

Canadian Office of Procurement recommendation	Implementation opportunities for Village of Cumberland
Advance identification and registration of suitable vendors of products frequently requested in emergency operations, including confirmation by vendors of willingness to respond to solicitations on short notice	Create a list of suitable food suppliers in the Village of Cumberland and the Comox Valley that could potentially provide food as part of an emergency response and identify which are locally owned and operated businesses
Establishment of agreements or standing offers with vendors of products typically requested in emergency operations, and specifying in these standing offers the need for stock availability and emergency preparedness	Engage potential vendors to understand: • Willingness to participate in emergency food procurement agreements • Food provisioning capacity including volume, timeframe for response, capacity to accommodate dietary considerations • Capacity to deliver and scope • Pricing • Willingness and capacity for delayed payments • Food safety standards

¹³ Office of the Procurement Ombudsmen. 2020. Knowledge Deepening And Sharing: Emergency Procurement. <https://opo-bou.gc.ca/documents/urgence-emergency-eng.pdf>

¹⁴ United Nations. 2020. Procurement Manual. <https://www.un.org/Depts/ptd/sites/www.un.org/Depts/ptd/files/files/attachment/page/pdf/pm.pdf>

Canadian Office of Procurement recommendation	Implementation opportunities for Village of Cumberland
Development of standard specifications/Terms of References/Statement of Work for goods, services, or works typically requested in emergency operations	Step 1: Synthesize information from food suppliers engagement into a resource guide of potential suppliers that can be used during an emergency response, including EOC operation Step 2: Work with the CRVD and emergency management personnel to formalize agreements and integrate into existing Emergency Plan and EOC operations. Step 3: Work with Comox Valley Emergency Management, local governments, CVRD, CVFPC, and relevant partners to initiate development of emergency food plan for the Comox Valley

The Comox Valley Food Policy Council can support this work by taking a lead in contacting local food suppliers to understand their capacity to support emergency food procurement, working with Comox Valley Emergency Management and the CVRD to create pre-established procurement agreements, and supporting the development of a Comox Valley Emergency Food Plan that integrates these agreements into a coordinated response.

Throughout the Comox Valley

Integrate agreements with food suppliers into a regional emergency food plan that provides the details for roles and responsibilities to initiate and deliver emergency food distribution services, with a particular focus on vulnerable operations. Similar to the City of Thunder Bay's Emergency Food Plan, it should engage local organizations and institutions with experience in food procurement, preparation and distribution, and serve as a complement to existing emergency plans. Potential community organizations to implicate in the development and maintenance of an Emergency Food Plan for the Comox Valley including Comox Valley Food Bank and other emergency food programming (e.g. Bread of Life Foodshare), Comox Valley Food Policy Council, LUSH Valley Action Society, Comox Valley Transition Society, Cumberland Food Share, Loaves and Fishes Food Bank and more.

The Comox Valley Food Policy Council is available to support this work in collaboration with local governments and regional emergency management personnel.

POLICY TOOL:

2 NEIGHBOURHOOD EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMS

DESCRIPTION & CONTEXT

The Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP) is a guiding framework for groups of people living in proximity to host events, get to know one another and make plans for how neighbours can support each other in an emergency. NEPP recognizes that communities with stronger connections are more resilient and that social cohesion strengthens emergency preparedness and resilience. For example, it's reported that the 2021 heat dome killed over 600 people in B.C., the majority of whom lived alone. Reviews of the incident have highlighted how these deaths were a result of both climate change and, importantly, social isolation.¹

NEPP therefore seeks to address this gap by building social cohesion and supporting community members to develop coordinated emergency preparedness and responses within their neighbourhoods. These programs are typically led by community volunteers and provided tools and resources through the regional emergency management department. NEPP typically have one or two neighbourhood "champions", and may assign roles and strategies for basic emergency preparedness and response, such as education regarding household-level preparedness, keeping a list of contacts, having a meeting point and creating basic roles for emergency response such as head counting and checking in with neighbours to ensure their basic needs such as water, food and first aid are met.

While NEPP guidelines recommend that households store a week of non-perishable food, there is an opportunity to strengthen how these plans consider neighborhood food access and food security, for example, encouraging additional food storage or sharing of community food assets such as stoves and larger kitchens, encouraging gardens and partnering with existing food security organizations.

There is a general opportunity for local governments to highlight the connection between resilient local food systems, food security programs and positive outcomes of Emergency Management and support the development of this integrated approach in planning tools such as the NEPP.

¹ Catron, Mandy. 2024. Make friends, prepare for climate change: 'your neighbours are your first responders.' <https://thenarwhal.ca/vancouver-social-connection-climate-disasters>

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Social: The NEPP program creates social connections between neighbours to facilitate resilience and mutual support during an emergency and subsequent recovery.

Physical: The program can encourage neighbours to identify neighbourhood assets that could be used in an emergency such as 4-wheel drive vehicles, large freezers, generators, muster points, etc.

PRECEDENTS

These precedents were selected for the success and comprehension of their NEPP programs over a coordinated region similar in size or character to Cumberland, and their additional focus on food systems and/or local government initiatives.

Quadra Island NEPP

Quadra Island has an exceptional NEPP program² that integrates food access programs and partnerships (e.g. the neighbourhood fridge program).

Going beyond a basic NEPP program, Quadra Island has a volunteer coordinator who provides an island-wide level of coordination, relationships and training, creating a highly connected and cohesive program. The volunteer coordinator acts as a liaison between neighbourhood champions and staff at Strathcona Regional District. The island has mapped their neighborhoods according to natural community boundaries, road networks and evacuation routes and provides ham radio training to interested neighborhood champions. To prepare and engage the NEPP participants the island hosts mock emergency training sessions once a year. These trainings always include local food preparation by local chefs prepared for participants in mock reception spaces. Chefs and cooks are considered and identified as valuable members of the NEPP hubs and island wide program, alongside volunteer medical and emergency responders.

The program's success is based on strong community relationships and volunteer engagement including partnership and inclusion of food security programs and organizations, such as the neighbourhood fridge program (shared fridges stocked with food), collaborations with the Quadra food bank, and food distribution networks for seniors and vulnerable populations.

The program goes beyond the 72-hour or one week food suggestion and encourages a three-week supply of food.

² Quadra Island Emergency Program. The Quadra Island Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP). <https://quadraemergency.ca/neighbourhood-emergency-preparedness-program-nepp>

Hornby Island NEPP

Similar to Quadra, Hornby Island has a robust NEPP program,³ bolstered by Island-wide coordination and a mapping system and integration of food security elements. Hornby coordinates and liaises between Comox Valley Emergency Management staff support and neighborhood champions through a volunteer-run Emergency Committee under the Hornby Island Residents and Rate Payers Association (HIRRA). With a small budget they have created a website that hosts the map and resources and easily identifies where gaps are in the NEPP program across the island.

On Hornby there are food security challenges for precariously housed individuals. There are also concerns around not having food in an emergency for the large summer tourist population. The committee chair highlighted these vulnerabilities and identified the importance of growing the community food security programs and partnership with the emergency program. "We have many farmers who are producing amazing food on Hornby; it is an impressive community of market gardens and farms on this small Island...[Hornby Island Educational Society and the Hornby Island Farmlands Trust] is the [a food hub] to support preparation, storage, preservation of the harvest from the community garden and elsewhere on the island."⁴ Last year, they operated Joe's Cafe to provide warmth, food, and Wi-Fi to isolated individuals, which also served as a community gathering space.

While these partnerships are informal there is a recognition of their importance in emergency management and the gap and opportunity for more food security integration into the program.

Salt Spring Island Neighbours Feeding Neighbours

Salt Spring's Neighbours Feeding Neighbours (NFN)⁵ is a unique program that specifically aims to incorporate their NEPP program with food systems elements that will provide more resilient food systems and emergency preparedness on the island. The program builds partnerships with food security and agricultural groups, and works to support farmer's emergency planning. Additional activities include the promotion of local seed banks, hosting community events (restoration on farmlands) and encouraging residents to plan for at least three weeks of food at the household level. In general, NFN activities build awareness of the connection between resilient local food systems and emergency preparedness.

The project has met with a number of challenges. One assumption was that connecting farmers with NEPP neighbourhood leads farmers could provide food in an emergency. This assumption was largely challenged by farmers needing to focus on cash crops and

³ Hornby Island Emergency Preparedness Committee. NEPP Hornby Island. <https://nepp.hirra.ca>

⁴ In conversation with Bernie Kowey Sept 4th, 2025

⁵ Neighbours Feeding Neighbours: Food Security & Sovereignty on Salt Spring Island. <https://nfnsaltspring.org/#news>

and communicating their own vulnerability. While it is still an aim to make farmer NEPP connections where appropriate, the project pivoted to supporting farmers to create emergency plans and looked at other ways to support farmers and the local food economy recognizing that a resilient local food system supports emergency prevention and preparedness.

A second challenge was related to the Regional District (RD) Emergency Management staff whose role was to coordinate the NEPP. Due to being a RD role, the coordinator was not able to share pod leads' contacts, which made communication and information sharing difficult. There is a case for local governments to support a volunteer coordinator that coordinates a municipality or geographic area, so they can easily communicate with neighbourhood leads and make the program unique to their community (such as Quadra and Hornby examples). These lessons learned provide important insight for local governments wanting to support food integration into NEPP.

One of the program's key contributions was the creation of emergency resource kits containing maps, phone trees and resource spreadsheets to support communication and tool-sharing during crises. Community dinners and neighbourhood gatherings also proved important, sometimes uncovering critical needs — for example, identifying an isolated senior requiring emergency support. Towards the end of the project, attention shifted to engaging local gardeners, many of whom had the capacity to grow large quantities of storage crops and were eager to learn preservation methods.

Municipal Placemaking and NEPP

This precedent is included to illustrate a municipal example of a program that contributes, on the neighbourhood level, to emergency preparedness by building relationships, spaces and assets for people to gather close to where they live.

The City of Courtenay in embarking on two “placemaking” projects; Better Together and Neighborhood Networks,⁶ which are designed to enhance community capacity, resilience and social wellbeing. Placemaking can be defined as “community spaces and interactions [that are] designed by the people who inhabit those spaces to gain more community connectivity and engagement.”⁷

⁶ City of Courtenay staff report. 2025. Community and Social Development Framework and Action Plan. <https://www.courtenay.ca/city-hall/mayor-and-council/council-meetings?id=d86fb192-ed3a-46fb-8b96-e8d0b9041c61&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English&Item=51&Tab=attachments>

⁷ Interview with Ryan Smolar Sept 11th, 2025

As an example of placemaking incorporation with neighborhood emergency preparedness, the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network in the community of Vic West created an emergency bench, as a neighborhood muster area where food and emergency supplies could be stored.⁸

ALIGNMENT WITH THE B.C. EMERGENCY PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Preparedness: The NEPP encourages communities to coordinate household, neighbourhood and community level plans to improve emergency preparedness through activities such as identifying neighbourhood skills, assets and roles and connecting to regional district emergency planning staff and other local government supports. Importantly, the NEPP program also supports emergency preparedness by building the social connections, trust and relationships that strengthen emergency preparedness at a community level. Programs are unique, to fit the needs of their communities and many include food access planning elements such as maintaining emergency food supplies and connecting with community food organizations.

Response: NEPP coordinates critical actions among neighbours such as communications, plans for sheltering in place, muster points and support for vulnerable community members. In addition to strengthening community-level emergency responses, NEPP can reduce the demand for Emergency Support Services and other emergency management resources in the response phase of an emergency so these limited resources can focus on areas of crisis.

Recovery: NEPP supports the recovery phase by continuing collaborative work during and after an emergency, debriefing what went well, what else might be needed and generally keeping spirits and mental health outcomes higher than without the programs, so recovery is a shorter time frame and outcomes are more positive.

⁸ Greater Victoria Placemaking Network. 2021. Vic West creates neighbourhood emergency supply bench. <https://victoriaplacemaking.ca/2021/placemaking/vic-west-creates-neighbourhood-emergency-supply-bench>

IMPLEMENTATION

Village of Cumberland

As a member municipality of Comox Valley Emergency Management (CVEM) the Village of Cumberland NEPP program is guided by CVEM Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP) and Guide.⁹ CVEM can also offer training, resources and support to use the guide and implement the program.

The Village of Cumberland is well positioned to deepen its support for a coordinated Cumberland region program to connect individual NEPP neighborhoods within Cumberland in a more coordinated way.

Cumberland is already a leader in community engagement with active groups- including food security organizations and programs, food events, educational evenings, emergency training and well as a many well loved and used public spaces where people gather. This is further supported through the Cumberland Climate Action Plans focus area to “Increase community preparedness and resilience.”¹⁰

Opportunities for the Village of Cumberland:

1. Promote and support a Cumberland-area NEPP Coordinator. Support Cumberland volunteer NEPP coordination to connect neighbourhood leads and liaison with CVEM to provide a cohesive Cumberland NEPP program;
2. Map Cumberland neighbourhoods and NEPP leads based on evacuation routes. Create a NEPP Map for Cumberland showing NEPP groups and gaps;
3. Promote the program and placemaking initiatives: encourage neighborhood block parties and educational events about Cumberland-specific hazards, emergency procedures or opportunities for networking and training. Cumberland Forest Society's Science Cafe is a great example of such an initiative;
4. Encourage NEPP program participants to incorporate food systems and food access into their plans. Including inventories of neighbourhood food assets such as freezers, gardens, larger kitchens or generators. Encourage relationships with food security organizations and programs across Cumberland and the CVRD such as deepening relationships with Cumberland Food Share, LUSH Valley, the Comox Valley Farmers Market and other local food and food distribution programs;

⁹ Comox Valley Regional District. Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP). <https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/services/emergency-management/emergency-preparedness/neighbourhood-emergency-preparedness-program>

¹⁰ Village of Cumberland. 2024. Climate Action Plan. pg. vii. https://cumberland.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Climate-Action-Plan_Final-for-web.pdf

5. Work with the CVEM and CVFPC to update CVEM NEPP, Appendix Q - Food Security: Urban Gardening¹¹ and the NEPP section of the NEPP guide to include additional ways to support emergency food such as creating inventories of neighbourhood food assets, preparing for three weeks of food shortages, resources for backyard gardening and food preservation and awareness of nearby farms and local food supplies. Include resources such as The University of Georgia's College of Family and Consumer Sciences' Preparing an Emergency Food Supply, Short Term Food Storage.¹²
6. Consider providing NEPP coordinator with access to public spaces, such as keys to the library.

Throughout the Comox Valley

1. Support NEPP volunteer coordinators in municipalities or geographically defined areas such as municipalities islands or rural areas, ensuring that neighbourhood-level emergency leaders remain active and connected;
2. Create a public-facing NEPP map based on community boundaries and evacuation zones, identifying NEPP neighbourhoods with leads and neighbourhood gaps;
3. Update the CVEM NEPP Appendix Q to include an expanded food section as described above;
4. Provide opportunities to connect NEPP coordinators and leads with food security orgs and programs through mock emergency planning exercises or training events;
5. Support placemaking activities by decreasing barriers for small gatherings or events (e.g. covering insurance or making permitting easier);
6. Work with the Comox Valley Community Foundation to promote the Neighbourhood Small Grants program¹³ to support NEPP activities.

¹¹ Comox Valley Regional District. Appendix Q–Food Security: Urban Gardening and NEPP. <https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/sites/default/files/2025-03/Appendix%20Q%20-%20Food%20Security%20Urban%20Gardening%20and%20NEPP.pdf>

¹² Andress, E., Harrison, J. Preparing an Emergency Food Supply, Short Term Food Storage. <https://www.fcs.uga.edu/extension/preparing-an-emergency-food-supply-short-term-food-storage>

¹³ Comox Valley Community Foundation. Neighbourhood Small Grants. <https://cvcfoundation.org/grant-seekers/neighbourhood-small-grants>

POLICY TOOL:

3 LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT

DESCRIPTION & CONTEXT

Local food procurement policies aim to increase the amount of local food purchased by a government and/or made available by public agencies. They are adopted with the goal of leveraging public purchasing power to support local food systems, local economic development, and locally-owned and operated businesses, while increasing access to local food. For example, it's estimated that independent businesses in B.C. recirculate up to \$63 of every \$100 in revenue in the local economy, whereas multinationals only recirculate \$14 of every \$100.¹ These policies can include additional goals in support of community wellbeing including health, just working conditions, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability.

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Economic: Local procurement leverages public resources toward locally-owned and operated business, increasing economic linkages and strengthening community economic development.²

PRECEDENTS

City of Toronto Local Food Procurement Policy

In 2013, the City of Toronto adopted a policy³ that requires all Request for Proposals (RFPs) and Request for Quotations (RFQs) for food purchases greater than \$3,000 to include language indicating that it is a policy objective of the City to increase the percentage of food that is grown within Ontario. The policy provides considerable flexibility for implementation which can be decided by the department undergoing procurement, outlining options such as:

- requiring vendors to provide a catalogue of the available items that meet the City's definition of local;
- cooperating among divisions to issue joint purchasing documents to select a primary vendor for specific goods;

¹ LOCO BC. 2019. New Report on the Economic Impact of Local Business. <https://www.locobc.ca/blogs/loco-bc-2019-study-on-the-economic-impact-of-local-business>.

² The Power of Purchasing: The Economic Impacts of Local Procurement (Pringle, 2013) provides a summary of the local economic opportunities generated from local procurement, quantifying these with a case study comparing the local economic impacts of purchasing from a locally-owned and operated office supply store and an international chain. See full report at [WEB-FINAL-Columbia_procurement_June_3_0.pdf](#)

³ City of Toronto. 2013. Local Food Procurement Policy. www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/8e60-local_food_policy.pdf

- requiring potential vendors to indicate their ability to track and calculate the percentage of local products being purchased by site and by division; and
- requiring vendors to identify the expected costs of local food in comparison to non-local items.

Procurement staff at the City of Toronto in both Seniors Services and Long-Term Care and Shelter and Support Services highlighted the importance of including local food procurement objectives within RFPs and, particularly, requiring respondents to indicate their ability to track local food expenditures. Through this provision, these divisions have been able to work with suppliers to track and increase local food expenditures. For example, the City was able to negotiate a reporting system with Sysco food services that identifies which foods meet the City's definition of local and facilitate departmental local food procurement. Both departments require vendors (Sysco) to track and report local food expenditures. Seniors Services and Long-Term Care estimated that an approximate average of \$2M dollars, which represents approximately 15-25% of their annual food budget, are spent annually on local food. Additionally, Shelter Services reported that the non-exclusive contracting is important for them as it allows them to also develop purchase orders directly from local farms. They expressed that a list of local vendors would facilitate this type of procurement by saving staff time dedicated to researching vendors.

District of Saanich Local Food Procurement Policy

In 2012 the District of Saanich introduced a local food procurement policy⁴ to increase the purchase of local food procured for operational needs and among vendors leasing space owned by the District. The policy targets that 40% of food purchases should be local, defined as from Vancouver Island and within British Columbia. The policy outlines that "all RFPs, RFQs and tenders to provide food for District of Saanich operations or for leasors of District owned space for food concessions, will include language that states the policy of Council and will require proponents to identify the local sourcing component of their proposal." Proponent evaluation would consider this information and annual reports to Purchasing would convey the percentage of local food purchased relative to overall District purchases.

The District experienced several challenges implementing this policy and, as of this report, has not fulsomely incorporated it into local procurement practice. First, the District noted that it procures less food currently relative to when the policy was developed, particularly since food services at a municipally-run golf course transitioned to private operations. Food procurement in the District is diffuse, primarily for internal catering, almost entirely prepared food and often occurring outside of the RFP process. The District is pursuing opportunities to promote social procurement goals with food purchases by providing staff education and

⁴ District of Saanich. 2012. Local Food Procurement Policy.

<https://www.saanich.ca/assets/Local-Government/Documents/Bylaws-and-Policies/local-food-procurement-policy.pdf>

purchasing guidelines associated with purchasing cards. Supporting local food systems is important to District staff, who are pursuing local procurement through activities such as local sourcing during municipally-run events, although there have been challenges aligning these with a coordinated approach to local food procurement.

Squamish/Lillooet Food Procurement Policy

The Squamish Valley Food Policy Council (SVFPC) has worked collaboratively with the District of Squamish to advance local and sustainable food procurement. The SVFPC is leading the Good Food Program,⁵ a multi-phase project to “shift the buying power in the Squamish to Lillooet Region towards procuring more locally grown food by implementing Good Food Values.” The program has advanced this goal by developing the Good Food Pledge,⁶ working with local governments on policy development, identifying barriers, hosting gatherings to connect local food suppliers and procuring institutions, and making connections in the region’s supply chain to strengthen local procurement practice.

The SVFPC and local governments have collaborated to develop high-level policy support for local food procurement in long-term planning processes. The OCP includes policy to “[s]upport regional food production and distribution and set community targets for local and sustainable food procurement”⁷ as part of its support for regional food security. Additionally, the Squamish Valley Agricultural Area Plan Squamish Valley Agricultural Plan Action 2.4 articulates “to support local procurement initiatives.”⁸

In 2022, the District of Squamish updated its purchasing policy⁹ to include language emphasizing social and sustainable priorities, and directly linked these to existing objectives outlined in the District’s Strategic Plan and Official Community Plan. The policy articulated support for “Good Food Values as articulated in the Squamish to Lillooet Good Food Pledge and Program in the procurement of food for District operational needs or when leasing District space to operators of food concession.”

The SVFPC highlighted the effectiveness of partnerships and relationships in this work. Collaborations between governments and citizen groups, like Food Policy Councils, can help advance policy and implementation in the context of limited government capacity and ensure that the latter is informed by community priorities and best practices.

⁵ Squamish Lillooet Regional District. Good Food Program. [Good Food Program | Squamish-Lillooet Regional District](#)

⁶ The Good Food Pledge has been signed by all local and regional governments. See Squamish to Lillooet Good Food Pledge <https://www.slrd.bc.ca/sites/default/files/Good%20Food%20Pledge.pdf>

⁷ District of Squamish. 2025. Official Community Plan policy 26.16.a). <https://squamish.ca/projects-plans-and-initiatives/master-plans/ocp/>

⁸ Squamish Lillooet Regional District. 2020. Squamish Valley Agricultural Plan. <https://www.slrd.bc.ca/inside-slrd/current-projects-initiatives/squamish-valley-agricultural-plan>

⁹ Squamish Lillooet Regional District. 2022. Purchasing Policy No. 34-2022. <https://www.slrd.bc.ca/media/file/slrd-purchasing-policy-no-34-2022>

ALIGNMENT WITH B.C. EMERGENCY PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Preparedness and Response: Local food procurement policy can be integrated into pre-arranged emergency procurement agreements¹⁰ to align local procurement with policy to expedite procurement during emergency response.

Recovery: When emergencies disrupt daily economic interactions, they often have a ripple effect on the local economy. Locally owned and operated businesses are particularly vulnerable during emergency-related closures as, unlike large chains, they often cannot draw from surpluses in other locations to cover local losses. Federal data estimates that in 2020, when the social distancing measures imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic were most prohibitive, 120,000 small businesses closed in Canada.¹¹ Recent data also suggests that debt incurred during the pandemic is one of the reasons for recent spike in small business closures.¹²

Local sourcing during the recovery phase of an emergency can provide important income for small, locally-owned businesses, stimulating local economic recovery. A post-disaster audit after the wildfires in Alberta's Lesser Slave Lake region in 2011 noted that residents would have preferred to see an increased emphasis on local vendors during procurement efforts for disaster recovery.¹³

¹⁰ See Policy Tool #1: Pre-established emergency procurement arrangements in this report

¹¹ Government of Canada: Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. 2024. Key Small Business Statistics 2024. <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/sme-research-statistics/en/key-small-business-statistics/key-small-business-statistics-2024>.

¹² DePatie, Mason. 2024. Record surge in insolvencies a 'problematic' sign of small-business closures. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/calgary/article/record-surge-in-insolvencies-a-problematic-sign-of-small-business-closures/>

¹³ KPMG. 2012. Lesser Slave Lake Regional Urban Interface Wildfire – Lessons Learned. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/864cc474-1ea2-4317-a15e-09bd8341abd6/resource/46c23585-370e-4280-b0fa-7245ec9483a9/download/0426-lessons-learned-final-report.pdf>

IMPLEMENTATION

Village of Cumberland

The Village of Cumberland is a demonstrated leader in social procurement and currently implements a social procurement framework that factors price, quality, environmental and social considerations to leverage public dollars toward maximizing public benefit. Cumberland is a small community, and food purchasing at present is largely limited to prepared foods for staff and small events. We also recognize that the strong social procurement culture at the Village often results in food purchasing from local purveyors and that any existing food procurement through LUSH Valley Action Society catering directly supports local farmers and harvesters. Given the lessons learned in other communities, and the best practices from available research available, we offer the following considerations for the Village to more formally integrate local food procurement into its social procurement practice. While food purchasing at Village of Cumberland is relatively small compared to some of the communities we engage in this research, there are important opportunities here. First, smaller, more frequent purchasing can facilitate local procurement without triggering procurement procedures or barriers required by international trade agreements. Second, should other local governments follow a local food procurement precedent from the Village, the combined impacts from all local governments combined present a notable potential economic contribution for the region.

The precedents above highlight the importance of mutually supportive practice and policy. While written policy articulates goals and sets an intention for local procurement now and into the future, the supportive practice enables its implementation and strengthens local procurement approaches that can continue to grow with the community's food procurement needs. These precedents also highlight the effectiveness of collaborating with citizen coalitions, like food policy councils. This report therefore recommends a written policy to set intentions, as well as supportive practice to enable implementation. Working with the Comox Valley Food Policy Council can minimize staff time requirements and help ensure the incorporation of best practices and community goals.

Opportunities for the Village of Cumberland:

1. Adopt local food procurement policy to set the foundation for current and future food procurement that:
 - a. Articulates a commitment to develop and maintain food procurement practice and culture that aligns with existing social procurement values;
 - b. Makes connections to existing local and regional policy supporting social procurement;

- c. Defines local as food that is grown or harvested in the Comox Valley (preferred), or, if not available, Vancouver Island, or B.C.. Prioritizing the Comox Valley where possible aligns with an intention to promote community economic development. If Comox Valley sourcing is not possible, prioritizing Vancouver Island recognizes the shared dependence of Island communities on the ferries for food distribution and aligns with a goal of strengthening Island-wide food systems as a form of emergency preparedness. Where neither is feasible, prioritizing the province of B.C. could provide the broadest definition of local food;
- d. Requires any future RFPs and RFQs to include language of the Village of Cumberland's social procurement objectives, its aim to increase local food procurement, and a requirement for vendors to track local food expenditures, and;
- e. Encourages event organizers to support local procurement by including language around social procurement and local food in event applications and sharing resources for local food procurement (see educational tools and resources below).

Note: While the Village of Cumberland does not currently procure food through RFPs or RFQ processes, setting the intention and further developing the practice can facilitate local procurement at larger scales if and when that occurs. A local food procurement policy develops intentions for future local food procurement practices as food purchasing in the Village increases with any growth in public services. This can include exploring of tools such as:

- City of Thunder Bay's "food future" or "food forward" contracts with local farmers, harvesters, Indigenous businesses and other food businesses¹⁴ using local products,
- Implementing local preferences when price is within a percentage difference from non-local using bid discounts¹⁵ or price preference mechanisms,¹⁶
- Setting increasing targets for local food purchasing such as the City of Markham's increasing target for local sustainable food purchases.

2. Develop supportive local food procurement practice through educational tools and resources:

- a. Work with the CVFPC to develop and maintain a list of potential vendors willing/able to track local food expenditures that can supply prepared local food to meet any current food needs and potential future requirements; and
- b. Work with the CVFPC to develop guidelines for use of purchasing cards for food purchases in a way that aligns with the existing social procurement goals.

¹⁴ The Greenbelt Fund. 2018. Breaking Down Local Food Barriers: Food Forward Contracts In Thunder Bay. https://tbfoodstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Breaking_Down_Local_Food_Barriers.pdf

¹⁵ Cleveland Ordinance No. 1660-A-09 adopted in April 2010 establishes a preference for local food production by providing 2 percent bid discounts on all applicable City contracts to businesses that are sustainable, locally-based, or purchase 20 percent of their food locally, to be combined for a maximum discount of 4 percent, as well as evaluation credit points for local producers, sustainable businesses, and local-food purchasers. Source: Growing Food Connections. 2015. Local, Healthy Food Procurement Policies. https://growingfoodconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/11/FINAL_GFCFoodProcurementPoliciesBrief.pdf

¹⁶ Policy in Alaska "requires locally-produced food to be purchased when the cost of the food is within a certain percentage of the price of similar from a conventional source." Sources:
Alaska Statutes. 2024. Title 3: Agriculture, Animals, and Food. <https://www.akleg.gov/basis/statutes.asp?title=03>
Food Literacy Center. 2018. Local Food Procurement Policies. <https://www.foodliteracycenter.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/procurement.pdf>

Throughout the Comox Valley

The food procurement context for Village of Cumberland is similar to that of other local governments in the region in that food purchases are decentralized, primarily by legislative services for meetings or gatherings, and below threshold to trigger robust procurement processes. However, these expenditures constitute a notable amount that can be directed to support local food provisioners and the local economy, especially if we consider the total expenditures for the City of Courtenay, the Town of Comox, and the Comox Valley Regional District. For example, from January to July 2025, the City of Courtenay spent \$6,000 on food procurement, and we therefore estimate that over \$10,000 is spent on food annually. The Village of Cumberland estimates its annual food expenditures for internal needs and volunteer work groups at approximately \$5,000. The total food expenditures for all three municipal governments is therefore estimated to be \$20,000 – \$25,000.

There is increasing interest in local procurement in our region. For example, in April 2025 the City of Courtenay passed a motion directing staff to prioritize the purchase of Canadian-made goods and services wherever possible in response to U.S. tariffs.¹⁷ The proposed approach that pairs a local food procurement policy with educational tools and resources to support staff procurement practices, could therefore strengthen local food procurement practices across the district. The Village of Cumberland can continue to set important procurement precedents in our region.

Draft Local Food Procurement Policy

Policy Context:

Village of Cumberland Social Procurement: “The Village of Cumberland uses a social procurement framework to leverage public dollars and achieve desirable and targeted social impact for the Village through competitive bid and purchasing activities. The Village’s procurement framework expands on the traditional understanding of ‘best value’ to include positive societal benefits, alongside high quality and competitive bids.”

Draft Comox Valley Agricultural Plan Goal 3: “Support actions to grow the regional agri-food economy.”

Village of Cumberland OCP 6.3.2 Local Food Production Objective 1: “Strengthen the regional food system.”

¹⁷ City of Courtenay. 2025. City of Courtenay prioritizing Canadian goods and services. <https://www.courtenay.ca/EN/meta/news/news-archives/2025-archives/city-of-courtenay-prioritizing-canadian-goods-and-services.html>

Policy

All Village of Cumberland divisions engaged in the purchase of food for operational needs will prioritize vendors who can ensure a minimum 30% local food sourcing¹⁸ for the service in question, and encourage local food sourcing at events held at spaces owned by the Village of Cumberland.

Purpose

To support the economic development of the local food system in the Comox Valley, increase access to local food, and to continue to strengthen social procurement practice.

Definitions

“Local” is defined as within the Comox Valley Regional District. If this is not possible, the term local can apply to the following geographical boundaries, in the following order 1) Vancouver Island 2) B.C..

“Minimum 30% local food sourcing” means that a minimum of 30% of a vendor’s expenditures on ingredients for the service in question are locally sourced.

“Provisioner” is anyone who is harvesting, farming, and/or gathering food.

Procedures

For food expenditures outside that fall below the threshold for formal procurement processes, Village of Cumberland staff will prioritize locally-owned and operated vendors that utilize a minimum of minimum 30% local food sourcing for the service. The Comox Valley Food Policy Council can support the practice by developing a list of vendors that meet the requirements for local sourcing, and/or other resources, to facilitate implementation.

Any RFPs for the purchase of food will include language that communicates the Village of Cumberland’s social procurement policy and local food procurement policy, the requirement for proponents to identify the local sourcing component of their proposal, and the need to submit a report upon request. This information will be used in evaluating successful proponents.

Event applications for the use of space owned by the Village of Cumberland will include language that states the Village of Cumberland’s local food procurement policy and encourage local food procurement by linking educational tools and resources, such as a list of local vendors, to the application process.

¹⁸ The minimum local procurement threshold and reporting requirements will need to be reviewed with local businesses in the Village of Cumberland to assess capacity of local businesses to provide this information and ensure alignment with goals to support locally owned and operated businesses in the Village.

POLICY TOOL:

4 ECOSYSTEM STEWARDSHIP AND INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

DESCRIPTION & CONTEXT

Indigenous food sovereignty is described as “the right of Indigenous Peoples to make decisions over the amount and quality of food they hunt, fish, gather, grow and eat. It ensures that these foods are accessible, culturally appropriate and produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods that uphold Indigenous knowledge system.”¹

Recognizing Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and their inherent right to decision making regarding their territories is crucial for effective ecological protection and stewardship. Many Indigenous communities have long-standing and deeply rooted cultural traditions of sustainable ecosystem stewardship and possess profound ecological knowledge.

The British Columbia Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA) which guides Comox Valley Emergency Management (CVEM), of which Cumberland is a member municipality, requires “ecological restoration, and cultural-Indigenous engagement,” including “considerations for Indigenous harvesting grounds.”²

Ecosystem stewardship and Indigenous food sovereignty practices and policies can include protecting land and water from extractive industry such as logging and other forms of land cover change, including urban expansion and agriculture. The protection of mature forests and their mitigating effects on drought provide an illustrative example of the relationship between ecological stewardship and emergency management. For example, the Alberni Clayquot Regional District (ACRD) and the Municipality of Tofino are managing increasing wildfire risks and drought. The municipality of Tofino recognizes the importance of Indigenous-led land and water protection as a means of ensuring the municipality's access to water in the face of drought and water shortages:

“The Tla-oqui-aht First Nation was instrumental in halting the logging on Meares, retaining the mosses among the old growth that hold moisture like a sponge and release it to the creeks even during dry periods...”³

In 2023, during a major drought, the mayor stated “[w]e are subsisting on fog and dew and every night it's feeding the creeks and our reservoirs... It's a mature forest [on Meares Island]. Forty years ago, they refused to log that watershed, and thank God they did.”⁴

¹ Morrison, D. 2011. Indigenous Food Sovereignty: A model for Social Learning. https://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/sites/default/files/policy_reform/Morrison2011,%20A%20model%20for%20social%20learning.pdf

² Personal Communication from Acting Manager, Comox Valley Emergency Management, June 10th 2025

³ Kloster, D. 2023, 'We are subsisting on fog and dew:' Tofino faces a water crisis. <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/tofino-faces-a-water-crisis>

⁴ Ibid

Stewarding healthy, native ecosystems has important co-benefits for resilience and emergency management, as these natural systems provide critical stabilizing effects lowering various risks. Other examples can be found in natural asset literature, such as the Courtenay River Municipal Natural Asset Initiative⁵ where the role of healthy, functioning ecosystems are critical in managing flood risks, ensuring drinking water quality, and mitigating heat. Healthy, mature forest ecosystems absorb water and slow its flow into rivers and streams, thereby buffering against the effects of drought, reducing wildfire risk, and improving habitat for traditional food plants and animals. In this way, ecosystem stewardship can be central to both emergency management as well as Indigenous food sovereignty. Mutually reinforcing benefits include improved access to traditional foods, enhanced social, cultural and ecological resilience with positive implications for emergency management and beyond.

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Social/Cultural: Community resilience in this context includes traditional food and cultural knowledge transfer including revitalization and cultural practices. The policy tool encourages access to traditional food systems and cultural practices and strengthens relationships and understanding across Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.

Ecological: Ecological dimensions include increasing watershed functionality, enhancing habitat, increasing biodiversity, improving water quality, carbon sequestration and preventing erosion.

PRECEDENTS

Supportive Policy Context

The following policies provide supportive context across First Nations, local, provincial, national, and international jurisdictions for the implementation of ecosystem stewardship and Indigenous food sovereignty into emergency management practice. While not an exhaustive list, select policy contexts are provided as a foundation to promote the continued development and implementation of this area of local emergency planning and action.

The United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), particularly Articles 29 and 31,⁶ provides a foundation for recognizing Indigenous rights to their territories, knowledge, seeds, medicines and flora and fauna, including the right to conserve and protect their environment. In Canada, Section 25 and 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982⁷ recognizes and

⁵ Canada in a Changing Climate. 2020. Courtenay River Municipal Natural Assets Initiative. <https://changingclimate.ca/map/courtenay-river-municipal-natural-assets-initiative/>

⁶ Government of Canada. Justice Laws Website: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/U-2.2/page-2.html>

⁷ Government of Canada. Justice Laws Website: Constitutional Documents. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/const_index.html

affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, including providing constitutional protection of Indigenous food sovereignty through protected access for Indigenous people to fish and hunt as formerly. In Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action progress notes on Calls to Action related to Health (18, 19 & 24), UNDRIP (43-44), and Language and Culture (14),⁸ there is a recognition that food is a central part of cultural and spiritual identity, and that reclaiming traditional food systems is essential for cultural revitalization.⁹

Provincially, B.C.'s Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA)¹⁰ includes ecological restoration and Indigenous food sovereignty through its emphasis on Indigenous engagement and the potential for co-management of traditional territories and resources during emergencies. The act acknowledges the intrinsic link between food security, Indigenous Food sovereignty and access to land and water resources.¹¹

Section 6 of the K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) Constitution, Traditional Territory and K'ómoks Lands,¹² the K'ómoks First Nation Treaty¹³ sections on lands, harvesting rights and resource management and the K'ómoks First Nation-Comox Valley Regional District Protocol Agreement for Communication and Cooperation¹⁴ all provide direction to local governments and KFN to work together to support ecosystem stewardship and Indigenous food sovereignty as well as emergency management by laying out a shared understanding of key interests, and establishes a positive government-to-government relationship in the Comox Valley including:

- Culture and heritage protection
- Environmental protection
- Land use planning and management: including but not limited to regional growth strategies, official community plans, treaty land issues, resource management plans, provincial planning processes, park management, and other land use plans and regulations
- Emergency preparedness
- Consultation and accommodation
- Other key interests as agreed to by the parties¹⁵

⁸ Government of Canada. Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524494530110/1557511412801>

9 Morrison, D, 2011.

10 Government of BC. 2024. Emergency Management Legislation. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/emergency-management/legislation-and-regulations>

11 Acting Manager, Comox Valley Emergency Management, June 10th 2025

12 K'ómoks First Nation. 2020. K'ómoks Constitution. <https://komoks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200515-KFN-Constitution-Final-Draft.pdf>

¹³ K'ómoks First Nation. 2024. K'ómoks First Nation Treaty: Ratification Version. https://komoks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/624-Komoks-Treaty-Ratification-Version-Final-Drafting-Documents_Rev2A.pdf

14 Comox Valley Regional District. 2010. K'ómoks First Nations Protocol Agreement. www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/sites/default/files/docs/About/1-kfn_protocol_agreement.pdf

15 Ibid

In Cumberland, the Cumberland Climate Action Plan provides measures “to enhance the resilience of natural areas, involving adopting fire management strategies to reduce wildfire risk, implementing water conservation measures to combat drought and prompting the use of native plant species that are more resilient to changing climate conditions.”¹⁶ The CAP implementation table provides specific suggested actions that could also provide support for Indigenous Food Sovereignty:

- “Protect trees and natural areas and minimize the development of forests and natural areas, for example, through the Tree Protection Bylaw and establishment of an urban containment boundary.
- Partner with landowners and stewards to undertake stewardship initiatives to support the restoration, health and connectivity of natural systems.
 - [supporting action:] Implement neighbourhood partnerships, awareness and education initiatives, such as CCFS Forest in the Village Program.
- Continue to collaborate with local partners and other municipalities through networks focused on green communities, food security, water security, emergency preparedness, to facilitate resource-sharing, pooling funding, and collaboration on climate resilience and mitigation projects.”¹⁷

The Village of Cumberland has signed onto the Island Food Charter which states “traditional hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering and conservation practices of Indigenous peoples are respected and enabled.”¹⁸

Novel Policy and Agreements

This section provides examples of the Capital Regional District and City of Victoria creating new policies and agreements to support ecosystem stewardship and Indigenous Food Sovereignty including supportive language in standard planning documents as well as novel action plans and agreements.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) has embedded reconciliation and government-to-government relationships with First Nations as a strategic organizational priority and has a First Nations Relations department.¹⁹ This commitment is reflected in several high-level guiding documents and planning processes, including the Regional Parks Strategic Plan, the Corporate Plan, the Climate Action Plan and the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan. These documents contain priorities and commitments related to collaborating with Indigenous nations on watershed management, climate resilience, park planning, and land acquisition. Across these strategies, the CRD aims to shift from conventional engagement models (e.g., consultation on isolated initiatives) to more holistic governance-level relationships with the goal of respecting Indigenous self-determination and territorial governance.

¹⁶ Village of Cumberland. 2024. Climate Action Plan. https://cumberland.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Climate-Action-Plan_Final-for-web.pdf

¹⁷ Ibid, pg. 79-82

¹⁸ Island Health. Food Charter. <https://www.islandhealth.ca/sites/default/files/food-safety/documents/vancouver-island-food-charter.pdf>

¹⁹ Capital Regional District. First Nations Relations. <https://www.crd.bc.ca/project/first-nations-relations>

The CRD has had a Traditional Use and Access Agreement²⁰ in place with one Nation for a portion of its watershed lands (one of three watersheds, currently not in active use). This agreement provides access for cultural and hunting activities, but it has yet to be implemented, possibly due to logistical challenges like gear requirements and questions of internal Nation administration. Still, the existence of this agreement is seen as important, even if it functions aspirationally in the interim. CRD is also receiving new requests from other Nations to access parks and watershed lands for hunting and is actively working through how to appropriately accommodate these within its governance and regulatory frameworks.

The CRD's Food Lands Trust Report²¹ discusses support for Indigenous food systems and provides formal recognition of the history of the land and its use for food and medicinal purposes the Regional Food and Agricultural Strategy²² includes recommendations to support Indigenous food systems and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

The CRD has created Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or protocol agreements with five First Nations to date, which serve as important relationship frameworks, often listing priorities like environmental protection, ecosystem restoration, and land and water stewardship. These are topics that inherently connect to Indigenous food systems and cultural practices, even when food is not explicitly named. There is an annual relationship funding as part of the agreements.

The CRD is hearing directly from nations about the challenges they face accessing land for traditional harvesting and spiritual practices in increasingly recreationalized landscapes. As the use of parks by the general public grows, Indigenous community members often experience a loss of privacy and safety while conducting cultural food and medicine activities like harvesting plants. In response, CRD is in the early stages of developing a Cultural Use and Safety Policy specific to parks and is also revising its Regional Park Land Acquisition Strategy to better include nations in land access decisions, particularly given how highly prioritized land repatriation is across all regional Nations.

The region is developing a joint engagement process with municipalities to streamline nation-to-nation contact and reduce administrative burdens. While food security is not yet a central part of this planning, there is growing awareness, especially since COVID-19, of the intersection between food systems, land stewardship and emergency preparedness and resilience.

²⁰ Capital Regional District. 2024. First Nations Relations Committee Meeting Agenda - Background: CRD + Reconciliation. www.crd.ca/media/file/2024-04-24agendapkgfnrc

²¹ Capital Regional District. 2019. Food Lands Trust Feasibility Study. <https://uplandconsulting.ca/projects/crdfoodlands>

²² Capital Regional District. 2016. Setting our Table: Capital Regional District Food & Agriculture Strategy 2016. <https://www.crd.ca/government-administration/data-documents/setting-our-table-capital-regional-district-food-agriculture-strategy-2016>

Additionally, through a consultation process named Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues, The City of Victoria created 32 Calls to Action on Reconciliation, which include restoration of natural systems and food systems.²³

Local Government Project Support

The following are examples of how various local governments are supporting Indigenous food sovereignty projects.

The City of Victoria's parks department started a volunteer program to support restoration work in parks including collaborations with W̱SÁNEĆ knowledge keepers on the SNIḎẔEŁ restoration project. The municipality recruits volunteers and provides transportation to and from restoration sites. This precedent helped to build relationships with the City of Victoria and the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations, and supported their constituents to become more aware of and involved in ecological restoration and Indigenous food sovereignty projects while building community and having fun.

The CVRD supports the Canada Goose harvesting project where CRD collaborates with multiple nations to address ecological concerns caused by invasive goose populations. The program includes monitoring, youth training and food harvesting and has been cited as a mutually beneficial initiative.

Many Nations have been unable to safely harvest shellfish for generations, due to contamination linked to agricultural runoff, septic systems and wastewater. The CRD, while not holding jurisdiction over agriculture, engages in stormwater monitoring and environmental testing to mitigate impacts.

In March of 2024, the Abneri Clayquot Regional District (ACRD) joined with other funders to support the 2024 Indigenous Food Gathering. The final report concluded that "[the] 2024 Island Indigenous Foods Gathering was a crucial initiative in advancing food sovereignty and emergency foods security for Vancouver Island's Indigenous communities. By encouraging collaboration, sharing traditional knowledge, and developing actionable strategies, this event succeeded in advancing resilient, sustainable food systems that honor Indigenous traditions and promote community well-being. The gathering highlighted the importance of Indigenous food sovereignty as the solution to food insecurity and discussed re-establishing historical trade routes to support each other in times of need."²⁴

²³ City of Victoria. Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues: Calls to Action. www.victoria.ca/media/file/vic-rec-dialogue-7-calls-actionnumberedpdf

²⁴ Ahousaht Food Sovereignty Initiative. 2025. Summary of Roundtable Discussions from the 2024 Island Indigenous Foods Gathering. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cdtKfcc8XRuPzULiD9Gs4pRbE174ukB8/view>

ALIGNMENT WITH B.C. EMERGENCY PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Prevention and Preparedness: Ecosystem stewardship and Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives strongly support the prevention and preparedness phases of emergency management. Protection of land, waterways and ecosystem functioning promote water quality, natural hydrological cycles and water access, drought resilience, mitigate heat and buffer against climate events such as flooding and wildfires, ultimately mitigating the risk and severity of emergencies.

As previously mentioned, protection of forests in Tofino has been a major protective factor against drought and water access crisis for the municipality.²⁵

Indigenous-led food sovereignty projects build community food security and the transfer of Indigenous food knowledge, which provides redundancy in knowledge, builds key relationships and assets to better prepare the community for emergencies.

Recovery: Indigenous-led food sovereignty projects can help communities recover from emergencies by focusing community efforts on restoring project sites. Measuring impacts from emergency events on the Indigenous led projects can contribute to Indigenous food sovereignty resilience.

²⁵ Kloster, D. 2024. B.C.'s drought: Tofino seeks to balance limited water supply with growth. <https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/bcs-drought-tofino-seeks-to-balance-limited-water-supply-with-growth-9161406>

IMPLEMENTATION

Village of Cumberland

Researcher's note: The Village of Cumberland and the CVRD are leaders in this work. In ways recognized here and not recognized in this report, there is acknowledgment that this work is being done. There is an inherent integration in the areas of Indigenous Food Sovereignty, Ecological Stewardship and Emergency Management. This report's aim is to make these existing integrations visible and ask Cumberland to work to connect these dots and make these connections visible to the community through policy, planning, partnerships and practice.

Engagement with Indigenous-led ecological monitoring such as the work of the K'ómoks Guardian Watchmen in the Cumberland forest and across KFN traditional territory is a great example of Cumberland's leadership in Indigenous led ecosystem stewardship, fostering relationships between First Nations, non-profit societies and community.²⁶

Cumberland Forest Society is a leader in pre-established connections across sectors (tourism, water, forestry, wildfire) to build community resilience. A recent wildfire event underscored the value of cross-sector dialogue framed around broader ecosystem and cultural themes. NGOs, like the Cumberland Community Forest Society (CCFS), are well positioned and have the skills to initiate conversations regarding integrating Indigenous food sovereignty and restoration into park and conservation land management toward more inclusive, decolonized practices and are not constrained by formal consultation processes.

Recognizing the importance of this work, Cumberland is encouraged to continue and deepen the relationships, engagement, consultation and co-management with KFN (and specifically the Guardian Watchmen), Cumberland Forest Society, Comox Valley Emergency Management, Comox Valley Parks and other partners including the Comox Valley Food Policy Council. This work fosters cross-sector dialogue regarding Indigenous-led ecosystem stewardship and Indigenous food sovereignty across policy and land management practices and to include the cultivation and harvesting of traditional foods wherever possible.

The Village of Cumberland's planning and policy documents can follow best practice in recognizing the existence and importance of Indigenous food systems, both historically and ongoing and work to continually improve Indigenous access to traditional food and medicine access across parks and managed lands.

²⁶ Nanwakolas Council. Ha-ma-ya-Stewardship Network. <https://nanwakolas.com/ha-ma-yas-stewardship-network/>

There are opportunities for the Village to support Cumberland Forest Society and others to pilot restoration and Indigenous food sovereignty projects in the Cumberland Community Forest. Examples included managing invasive species like blackberries, integrating Indigenous knowledge into conservation and the role of municipal parks planning in reconciliation and food systems.²⁷

Community-led efforts such as Fungus Fest, which integrates ethics, foraging education and Indigenous participation is another example of aligned events the Village can continue to support. In summary, some opportunities for the Village are as follows:

1. Provide visibility regarding the interconnectedness of Indigenous food systems, ecosystems and emergency management in plans and policy documents;
2. View parklands as central sites for reconciliation and food resilience;
3. Support partnerships with local conservation organizations that can assist in community engagement, especially First Nations engagement regarding traditional resource and food management practices;
4. Integrate food systems infrastructure into facilities and parks planning;
5. Work across sectors to create policy and practice for First Nations access to traditional foods;
6. Support pilot projects around restoration and Indigenous food sovereignty on public lands;
7. Deepen co-management practices on managed lands and other ecological assets, including Indigenous knowledge keepers in processes such as parks planning, invasive species;
8. Work with parks staff regarding education on Indigenous food systems and Indigenous access to food systems for harvesting and support restoration of Indigenous food systems in parks;
9. Embed support for Indigenous knowledge and ecological stewardship into land use decisions.

²⁷ In conversation with Cumberland Forest Society, May 2025

Throughout the Comox Valley

First Nations, Indigenous organizations and local governments share goals and interests in stewardship of lands and functional ecosystems for their many benefits to their communities and often recognize that working together with local governments provides unique opportunities to leverage funding, and more easily meet collective goals.

There are many opportunities and resources to support local governments towards these goals including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs):²⁸ IPCAs are areas where Indigenous communities lead in conservation efforts, often combining traditional knowledge with modern science to protect biodiversity and cultural landscapes. Local governments can partner with Indigenous communities to establish joint management or co-management agreements, such as the CRD Traditional Use and Access Agreements and MOUs or Protocol Agreements.

The Regional Community to Community (C2C) program²⁹ supports the advancement of First Nation-local government reconciliation and relationship building through the development of agreements, joint plans, strategies and review of bylaws and/or policies in order to develop recommendations for amendments or new bylaws and/or policies.

In general, local governments can support this work through:

1. Recognizing and making visible the interconnectedness of Indigenous food systems, ecosystems and emergency management within policy and implementation;
2. Viewing parklands as central sites for reconciliation and food resilience;
3. Aligning regional policy with provincial, federal and Indigenous policy and best practice
4. Formally recognizing Indigenous food-systems history and current practices across all CVRD planning documents;
5. Supporting restoration and harvesting rights and long term land and water access for Indigenous peoples in local parks;
6. Providing, or connecting Indigenous led projects with, funding opportunities, alerting Indigenous groups when funding is available;³⁰
7. Creating agreements for co-management and shared use of lands or resources that recognize Indigenous food Sovereignty;
8. Conducting in-kind communications and educational support for Indigenous-led food-sovereignty projects;

²⁸ Indigenous Leadership Initiative. Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas. <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/indigenous-protected-and-conserved-areas>

²⁹ Union of BC Municipalities. Community to Community Program. <https://www.ubcm.ca/c2c>

³⁰ Government of B.C. Indigenous Food Pathways Program. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/indigenous-food-pathways-program?utm_source

9. Supporting third-party community partners that have and can build strong relationships with Indigenous and First Nations groups;
10. Integrating of Indigenous Food Sovereignty into the Regional Parks Strategy.

There is a need to strengthen partnerships across sectors to strengthen resilience and emergency preparedness through ecological stewardship that includes Indigenous food sovereignty. In communities like the Comox Valley, where relationships are strong, much of the groundwork is already in place. Deepening partnerships with KFN, Comox Valley Emergency Management, Project Watershed, the Comox Valley Food Policy Council and others can continue to move this work forward.

OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section summarizes the recommendations for advancing the policy tools discussed in this report. A complete explanation of each policy recommendation can be found in the previous corresponding policy tool discussion.

1 Pre-established emergency procurement arrangements

- a. That the Village of Cumberland work with the Comox Valley Food Policy Council to assess the capacity of appropriate vendors and establish agreements that can be activated in the case of an emergency need for food, and;
- b. That the Village of Cumberland work with Comox Valley Emergency Management, local governments, CVRD, the Comox Valley Food Policy Council and other relevant partners on the development of a coordinated emergency food plan for the Comox Valley.

2 Neighbourhood emergency preparedness programs

1. That the Village of Cumberland Council explore the creation of a Cumberland Village NEPP volunteer coordinator or committee to connect and increase the NEPP leads across the municipality in a coordinated approach;
2. That the Village of Cumberland consider funding the creation of a NEPP map of Cumberland, to strengthen emergency preparedness, and;
3. That the Village of Cumberland update and implement the NEPP guide Appendix Q (Food Security), with the support of the Comox Valley Food Policy Council and Comox Valley Emergency Management and strengthen relationship building and integration of resilient local food systems and food security actors and organizations into the NEPP program.

3 Local food procurement policy and practice

- a. That the Village of Cumberland revise and adopt the local food procurement policy, and;
- b. That the Village of Cumberland work with the Comox Valley Food Policy Council to develop the suggested complementary educational tools and resources to facilitate local food procurement policy implementation.

4 Ecosystem stewardship and Indigenous food sovereignty

- a. Village of Cumberland Council support for ecological stewardship and Indigenous food sovereignty projects as part of a larger Emergency Management strategy, and;
- b. Village of Cumberland Council support for Indigenous food sovereignty projects in parks and parks planning and activities in the Cumberland Community Forest, and;
- c. That the Village of Cumberland includes Indigenous food systems history and current rights to traditional food practices in official Village documents.

GAPS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- 1. Implementing policy tools:** The implementation of these tools will likely require additional financial support and capacity. The Village may need to prioritize implementation and develop a suitable timeline. For most of the tools, there is an action to embed the tool into a Council resolution, policy or planning document. All tools will also require implementation and appropriate partnership development between local government(s) and relevant community organizations or businesses.
- 2. Researching additional policy tools:** This research prioritized policy tools based on the recommendations from the Village of Cumberland, focusing on local priorities and capacity. Additional policy tools exist with the potential to strengthen food planning in an emergency context, in terms of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. These include:
 - Support and development of local food access initiatives with systems that can be scaled to support vulnerable populations ongoing and provide a basis for increased food access needs in an emergency (e.g. meal programs, food box delivery programs, etc.);
 - Support and development of food infrastructure (e.g. food hubs and processing facilities);
 - Complete food supply chain asset mapping and pre-existing agreements for emergency response;
 - Resource-sharing agreements (e.g. southern Alberta resource sharing agreements);
 - Natural asset management (e.g. Town of Gibsons inclusion of natural assets, such as key drinking water sources, in financial planning to reduce costs and maintain ecosystem integrity through natural asset management);
 - Governance structures for emergency food planning (e.g. Cowichan Emergency Food Task Force, incorporating local food system experts at the EOC table);
 - Waste management, prevention, and redistribution plans (e.g. protocols and agreements for food businesses dealing with perishable surplus).
- 3. Sharing tools to other B.C. municipalities and regional districts:** While this work was developed with the goals of supporting the Village of Cumberland, there is also the secondary goal of sharing this information with other jurisdictions to support emergency food planning in other municipalities and regional districts. Distribution of this work and presentations as requested can be done with permission from the Village of Cumberland.
- 4. Food Policy Leadership:** This research focused on identifying and exploring existing research and practice in emergency planning with respect to the food system, using emergency policy precedents from other jurisdictions. However, it is important to acknowledge the opportunity to champion policy and practice in areas that without existing precedent and the opportunity associated with being the first to explore and implement novel policy approaches.

CLOSING REMARKS

There is a growing recognition of food system vulnerability, both locally and globally, and the need to build capacity for food planning in emergency contexts. In this changing climate, we know that historical trends will not be good indicators of future trends and there is a growing need to strengthen the resilience of our communities through thoughtful policy development as well as through community connections. The Village of Cumberland is recognized as a municipal leader in local food policy and progressive community-focused initiatives such as urban agriculture policy and social procurement policy. The Village has also shown consistent support to Cumberland food security organizations servicing those dealing with acute food insecurity, increasing support over the pandemic years.

Throughout this research, community members spoke to the importance of building relationships across “silos” and sectors prior to emergencies. Comox Valley Emergency Management staff spoke to the importance of these relationships and community coordination in order to take pressure off the limited resources during the response phase of emergency management in particular. This report provides some suggestions while recognizing that the community of Cumberland has shown leadership in this capacity as well, and has an approach to building cross-sectoral relationships and collaborations. Our goal is to showcase the important leadership from the Village in community building, food systems policy and collaborative problem-solving, and propose options to continue to advance and strengthen this work in partnership with others in our region.

APPENDIX A

CONSULTED PARTIES

- Alberta Emergency program procurement
- B.C. Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness Financial Operations
- Capital Regional District First Nations Relations Manager
- Capital Regional District Waste Management
- City of Courtenay Purchasing and Procurement
- City of Toronto Seniors Services and Long-Term Care
- City of Toronto Shelter and Support Services
- City of Toronto Social Procurement Program, Purchasing and Materials Management Division
- City of Victoria Fire Department Emergency Program
- City of Victoria Parks, Recreation and Facilities Food Systems Coordinator
- Comox Valley Community Foundation Executive Director
- Comox Valley Community Foundation Small Neighbourhood Grants
- Comox Valley Emergency Management Emergency Planning Coordinator
- Cumberland Forest Society Executive Director
- District of Saanich Fire Department Emergency Program
- District of Saanich Strategic Procurement
- District of Saanich Sustainability Planning
- Emergency Support Services B.C. Provincial Response Programs
- Hornby Island Emergency Preparedness Committee
- Project Watershed Executive Director
- Quadra Island Emergency Support Services Director and Community Liaison
- Ryan Smolar: Placemaking, Road to Resilience
- Salt Spring Island Neighbours Feeding Neighbours past Coordinator
- Squamish Climate Action Network

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF CLIMDEX INDICATORS

Description of select Climdex indicators reported.

PRCPTOT

(Annual total precipitation on wet days)

Reports the total annual precipitation on days where precipitation is > 1mm, reported in mm.

Rx5day

(Maximum consecutive 5 day precipitation)

Reports the precipitation amount for the 5 day period of greatest rainfall in a given year in mm of rainfall.

Tx90p

(Percentage of days when daily maximum temperature is above the 90th percentile)

This index uses an average historical baseline to calculate the 90th percentile temperatures for a given day in the 1961-1990 period, and then gives a percentage of days in the year when the daily maximum temperature is above that threshold value. Values are reported in percentage of days.

WSDI

(Annual count of days with at least 6 consecutive days when TX > 90th percentile)

Reports the number of days in each year that are part of a “warm spell”, defined as a 6 day period (or longer) where daily maximum temperatures are higher than the 90th percentile of baseline temperatures for the period. Values are reported in number of days.

For more information see Kreitzman et. al. 2025 and www.climdex.org/learn/indices

APPENDIX C

HORNBY ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM MAP

Comox Valley Regional District. 2023. Hornby Island Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program Map. <https://hirra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Hornby-NEPP-map-Sept-2023.pdf>

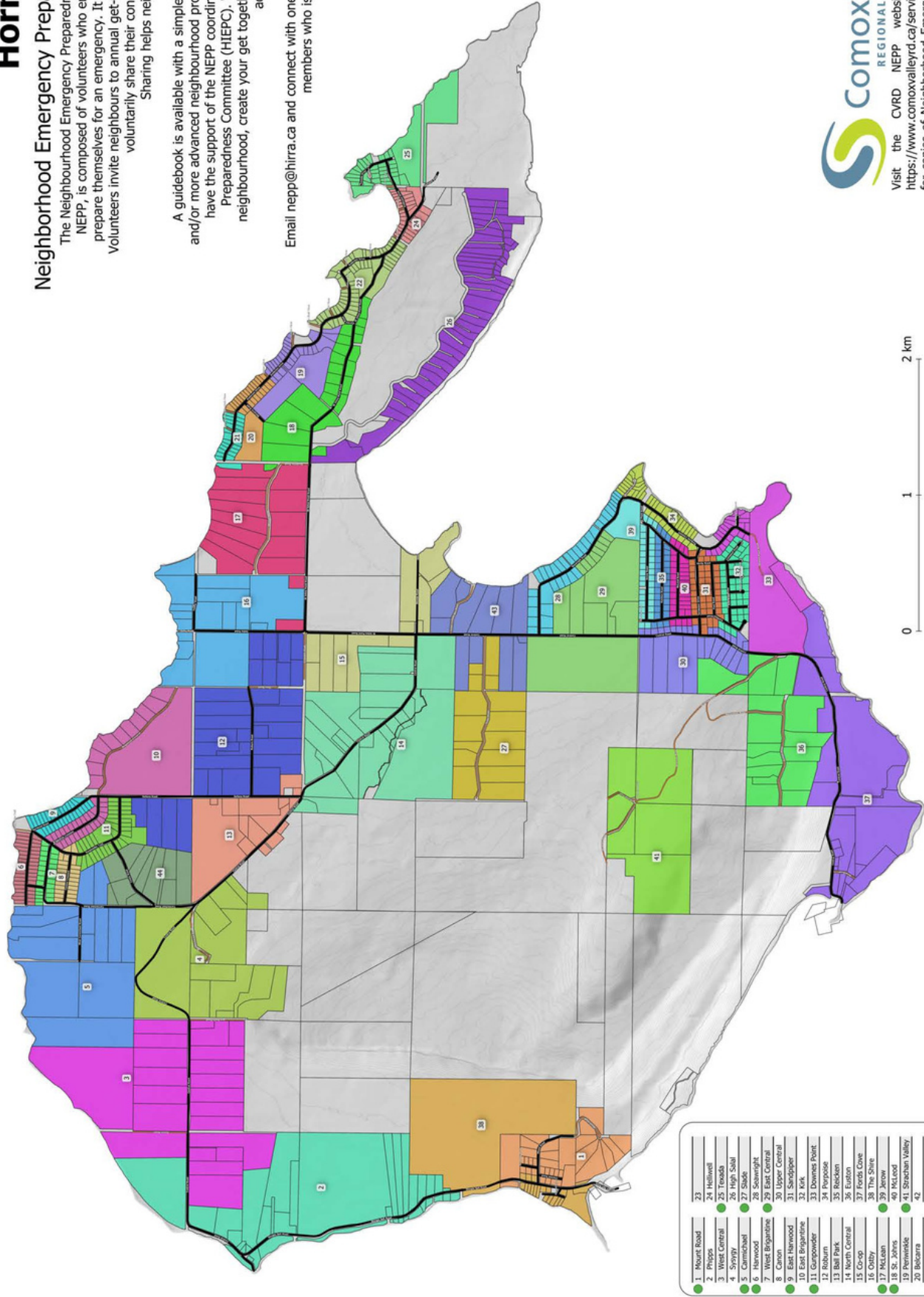
Hornby Island

Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Program

The Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Program, also known as NEPP, is composed of volunteers who encourage their neighbours to prepare themselves for an emergency. It is a "grassroots" endeavour. Volunteers invite neighbours to annual get-togethers where people may voluntarily share their concerns, needs, and resources. Sharing helps neighbours support each other.

A guidebook is available with a simple step by step guide for basic and/or more advanced neighbourhood programs. NEPP volunteers will have the support of the NEPP coordinator from the HI Emergency Preparedness Committee (HIEPC). We can help you define your neighbourhood, create your get together, and have brochures and accurate information to share.

Email nepp@hirra.ca and connect with one of our volunteer committee members who is committed to this program.



APPENDIX D

CVEM NEPP

APPENDIX Q – FOOD SECURITY: URBAN GARDENING AND NEPP

Comox Valley Regional District. Your Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP): Appendix Q - Food Security: Urban Gardening and NEPP.
www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/sites/default/files/2022-08/final_digital_nepp_guide.pdf

Appendix Q—Food Security: Urban Gardening and NEPP

According to Vancouver Island FoodHubs, “Communities are challenged by a multitude of food issues, which are exacerbated due to the vulnerability inherent for Island communities. A just and sustainable food system in the Island region requires viable, sustainable, and resilient systems to grow, harvest, process, transport, and distribute food while minimizing waste.”

They ask these questions:

Is Vancouver Island food secure? Are we prepared if there is a major transportation disruption, natural disaster, or economic crisis?

Some key issues we face on Vancouver Island include:

- limited access to safe, healthy, culturally acceptable foods;
- increased food insecurity;
- reliance on food traveling over long distances; and
- environmental threats to the food system including climate change and pollution.

Fresh food is typically not something that is considered when creating your preparedness kit, but that is changing. Community and backyard gardens can increase the availability of nutritious foods, strengthen community ties, reduce environmental impacts, and create a more sustainable food system.

Fostering urban gardening has two main benefits for a NEPP community:

1. It can lead to a source of sustainable nutritious food.
2. It builds both social ties and a greater feeling of community. (A sense of community is a major building block within a NEPP neighbourhood.)

The Comox Valley Emergency Program recommends stockpiling enough food and water to keep you and your household fed for at least seven days. Typically these food stores consist of items that will last for months or even years. Quite often they are freeze-dried, canned, or powdered. During a disaster, however, you’d rather have foods that not only fill your belly but also give comfort or a feeling of normalcy.

While some people stockpile army rations, others find great comfort in gardening, preserving, and eating the fruits of their labour. A backyard or community garden can support a substantial amount of your nutritional needs, plus during a disaster, it’s a healthy and tasty supplement to what may otherwise be a tedious diet. And if you work the garden, you have two additional benefits: a much-needed physical and mental outlet for anxiety and the ability to reclaim a little bit of control.

For information on Food Hubs within the Comox Valley, visit www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/foodhubs