



City of Richmond

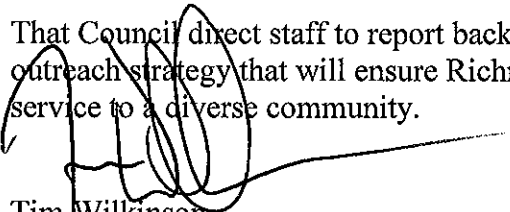
Report to Committee

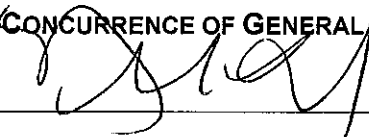
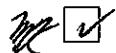
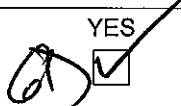
To: Community Safety Committee
From: Tim Wilkinson
 Acting Fire Chief, Richmond Fire-Rescue
Re: Cultural Transformation within Richmond Fire-Rescue

Date: February 3, 2011
File:

Staff Recommendation

That Council direct staff to report back on the development of a comprehensive recruitment and outreach strategy that will ensure Richmond Fire-Rescue has the capacity to provide excellent service to a diverse community.


 Tim Wilkinson
 Acting Fire Chief, Richmond Fire-Rescue
 (604)303-2734

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY			
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE		CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Human Resources	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Facilities Services	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES	NO	REVIEWED BY CAO
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			YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

This report addresses Council's goal to:

1. *Ensure Richmond remains a safe and desirable community to live, work and play in through an interdisciplinary approach to community safety and a term strategy that results in...the implementation of changes in the culture of Richmond Fire Rescue.*

Background

In 2006, Susan Paish, formerly of Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP, conducted a Council mandated review of Richmond Fire-Rescue (RFR). Her findings are documented in what is commonly referred to as "the Paish report". The report made a number of recommendations designed to make RFR a more inclusive and effective department. These recommendations touched on many issues including culture, facilities, recruitment, and hiring. The report clearly indicated that strong leadership and training would be instrumental in moving the department forward. With regard to recruitment and hiring, the report commented on the historical lack of women and visible minorities in RFR's hiring pools and concluded that it would be "*highly unlikely that RFR will increase its demographic diversity unless there is a significant change in the demographic diversity of the candidate pool*".

Following the completion of the Paish Report, Vincent Ready issued a consent order, as arbitrator for a harassment grievance involving RFR. The order reinforced issues that the Paish report had already identified regarding changes to facilities and changes to culture through training.

These two documents were significant catalysts to begin fundamental change within RFR.

In September 2006, Council endorsed the Fire Department Review Implementation Plan designed to address the recommendations identified in the Paish Report. Additionally, an action plan was developed to quickly address Ready's order.

Findings Of Fact

The key components of positive cultural change within RFR have been changes to facilities, training, employee engagement, recruitment, and community outreach.

Facilities

In December 2006, Fire Hall Facility Standards were developed to address the issues of fire fighter privacy and equal access. These standards serve as guidelines for existing and new fire halls.

By February 2007, RFR reported to Committee that physical alterations addressing the issues of gender equity and privacy had been made to the existing fire halls and that new halls would meet the new standards.

Training

Both the Paish report and Ready order identified training as a key component to changing the culture within RFR.

In 2007, the practice of developing annual learning plans began for RFR management and senior positions within the bargaining unit. These plans established learning goals, which focussed on non-technical learning. Greater emphasis was placed on the importance of interpersonal and leadership skills for all staff. This was a marked departure from the predominantly technical skills focus of previous years.

The focus on non-technical skills training has continued into the present time with no erosion of the fire fighters' technical skills. Staff has taken part in a number of courses, workshops and e-learning opportunities which focus on skills such as workplace and interpersonal skills development. An example being Insights training, which helped RFR staff develop interpersonal skills through greater understanding of themselves and others.

In June 2009, RFR began the Leadership Development Initiative (LDI). This initiative focuses on officer development, succession planning, interpersonal skills development, and regular performance feedback. The LDI adopted competencies from the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and customized them for the City of Richmond and RFR. These competencies are applied to each of the roles within RFR, from fire fighter to Fire Chief. The competencies describe exemplary behaviours and key performance expectations, along with key training objectives for RFR leadership roles. The LDI ensures that RFR has the leadership capacity to deal with the challenges facing the Fire and Rescue industry today and into the future. The LDI is supported by, and linked to other corporate learning programs, such as the Employee Development Plan.

Richmond Fire-Rescue's Leadership Development Initiative is leading all departments in BC and many in the rest of the country. RFR management has presented on this initiative at the World Police and Fire Games Congress, the International Association of Fire Chiefs conference, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, and the BC Fire Chiefs Association conference. Additionally, as a result of this initiative, RFR was invited by the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) to assist in revising their existing Fire Officer programs and in building the curriculum for a new course, "Leading for Inclusion in Emergency Services".

Employee Engagement

Since the Paish report and Ready's order, significant strides have been made in engaging RFR's personnel.

An improved relationship between management and the IAFF Local 1286 executive has in a number of instances helped to increase acceptance and involvement in department initiatives. For example, in 2008, management and the executive engaged the membership in helping to identify suitable women and visible minority candidates for sponsorship at the JIBC Fire

Academy. As a result members encouraged a number of quality candidates to apply. Three of these candidates received City sponsorship and were subsequently hired.

Improved communication between Fire management and staff has increased the understanding of issues by both parties. Fire management now meets with each work unit during regularly scheduled "Hall visits". These visits give staff an opportunity to raise issues directly with management and for management to address concerns. It is also an opportunity for management to reinforce the department's vision and direction.

Staff is being encouraged to participate on committees which significantly impact the department. Examples are the Leadership Development Initiative Committee, which customized the initiative for RFR and the IT Committee which addresses current IT issues and crafts the department's 5 year IT plan.

Over the past 3 years, significant strides have been made in addressing RFR's attendance management issues. A decrease in sick time and an increase in staff participation in modified work duties are positive indications of staff engagement. At the conclusion of 2010, the Fire Chief was able to send letters to a significant number of staff, congratulating them on their exemplary attendance in 2010. In 2011, RFR will be adopting the new corporate attendance management program which is expected to yield further positive results.

To strengthen staff's corporate connection, RFR management strongly encourages them to participate in City initiatives such as the new Health & Wellness Program and Richmond University. The resulting involvement by RFR staff speaks to the increase in their level of engagement.

On January 15, 2011, RFR held an event to recognize the newest members of the department and the members who had reached significant milestones in service to the city and the province. Fire Staff were recognized for their achievements by the Mayor, the Lt. Governor of BC, city management, and fire management, in front of their family and co-workers. The event set a new standard for such events within the department and received positive reviews from the attendees.

Recruitment and Outreach

In March 2007, an application went forward to the BC Human Rights Tribunal requesting Special Program approval, to allow for preferential hiring of and educational assistance for women and visible minorities.

While the Special Program application was still before the BC Human Rights Tribunal, RFR held its 2007 recruitment process publicly communicating a desire to create a more diverse candidate pool. Of the 20 fire fighters hired, 7 were visible minorities, and 2 were women.

In October 2007, the BC Human Rights Tribunal granted Special Program approval, until December 2010, which allowed the City to:

- fill up to 75% of available fire fighter vacancies, per year, with women and visible minority candidates.

- send women and visible minority candidates to the Justice Institute Fire Academy, to complete fire fighter training, provided they met all other qualifications.

For the past 3 years, the BC Human Rights Tribunal Special Program approval has allowed RFR to clearly advertise and promote the targeted hiring preference and tuition assistance. During this time RFR has also focussed on increasing its community profile and outreach. RFR now participates in a number of job fairs and advertises in mainstream and non traditional publications and venues, such as The Georgia Strait, Ming Pao, and Craig’s List. RFR visually portrays diversity through promotional material, posters, and a recruitment/outreach video. Through Facebook and a re-designed web page, that feature integrated video clips, RFR has enhanced its presence on the internet.

RFR has nurtured relationships with organizations such as the Richmond Multicultural Concerns Society and Richmond School District in an effort to increase awareness in fire fighting as a career. A work experience pilot program has been developed which introduces Richmond high school students to fire fighting. Additionally career presentations are made to various other groups including students at the Justice Institute Fire Academy and S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Between 2008 and 2009, career fire fighter applications increased significantly. In 2010, no recruitment process was undertaken, as a substantial shortlist existed from the 2009 process.

Table 1: RFR applications 2008 and 2009.

2008		2009		% +
Total Applications	185	Total Applications	319	+72%
Women	19	Women	24	+26%
Visible Minority males	63	Visible Minorities	100	+59%
White Males	103	White Males	195	+89%

When the City made application to the BC Human Rights Tribunal in March 2007, 4% of RFR’s active suppression staff was from the target group- 8 visible minorities and no women. By the end of 2008, the number of women and visible minorities had tripled from 4% to 12.5% of all active suppression staff. In 2009, 15% of RFR’s active suppression staff was from the target group. At the time of this report 17% of active suppression staff is from the target group- 24 visible minorities and 8 women. It is important to note that although the hiring process changed, the principles of service excellence were maintained. The candidates hired are excellent fire fighters.

Table 2: RFR hiring statistics, January 2008 to December 31, 2010.

Year	Total Hired	Women		Visible Minorities		Caucasian Males	
2008	24	2	8%	5	21%	17	71%
2009	6	2	33%	3	50%	1	17%
2010	4	2	50%	1	25%	1	25%
Totals	34	6	18%	9	26%	19	56%

Workforce diversity also allows RFR to better meet its customers' needs. Some of the key benefits of a diverse workforce are an increase in language capacity and a greater depth of understanding of different cultures. Research has also proven that by visually reflecting a community a department builds trust. Evidence of these benefits has been demonstrated in a number of instances:

- One such instance involved an elderly disoriented man who only spoke Chinese. One of RFR's Asian fire fighters was able to communicate with the man. As a result he was able to contact the man's family and re-unite them prior to any harm coming to the gentleman.
- A greater capacity for languages has also been positively demonstrated during educational presentations to groups such as French immersion classes and ESL adult education classes.
- Knowledge of cultural norms by South Asian firefighters helps crews to quickly gain the trust of South Asian family members, assess situations, work with the patriarch of the family and create a solution that allows access to the scene, while maintaining a high level of respect and dignity for all involved.
- Fire fighters report that women patients often appear visibly relieved when women fire fighters attend medical calls, especially those of a sensitive nature.

Financial Impact

None at this time.

Conclusion

In November 2010, RFR management attended a workshop on diversity in the Fire Service. A number of BC fire departments were represented. At the workshop, women fire fighters confirmed that the lack of privacy and equity access in facilities remains an issue at other departments. A representative from the IAFF's Human Relations Committee, who is also the IAFF 6th District Vice President, commented that this issue continues to be one of the top concerns throughout the province. Since early 2007, this issue has been positively addressed in RFR's existing, new, and temporary facilities.

The Paish report commented that RFR had several significant strengths and that its emergency response was a source of great pride for its membership. Over the years RFR has established itself as a leader in the Fire Service, in training, equipment and technical expertise. RFR is making considerable progress in other areas as well, such as employee development, diversity, and recruitment. Other departments and agencies are beginning to look to RFR for best practices such as JIBC for Leadership Development, Canadian Fire Chief's Association inviting RFR members to be Leadership Mentors and London, Ontario regarding RFR's recruit testing.

As evidenced by the examples in this report, staff engagement has increased and is expected to continue to do so, as more opportunities arise for staff participation in RFR and City initiatives.

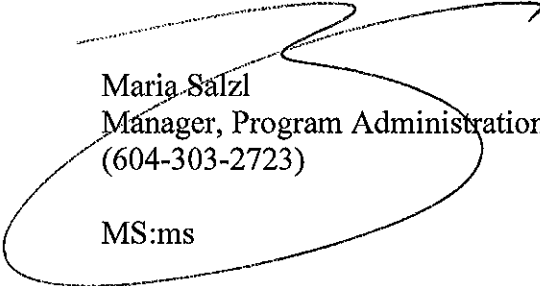
Over the past 3 years, increased outreach and targeted recruitment, aided by the BC Human Rights Tribunal Special Program approval, have resulted in 44% of RFR's vacancies being filled by women and visible minorities. This is a 23% increase over the previous 3 recruitment processes. The percentage of women and visible minorities in active suppression duties is now over 4 times higher than before the special program approval.

RFR is becoming a more diverse and inclusive department. The public attention surrounding the Special Program approval, and RFR's progress in recent years, have raised RFR's profile regarding diversity in the Fire Service; RFR is seen as a leader in welcoming women and visible minorities. Potential applicants frequently comment that they want to work at RFR because it is a progressive department that is committed to diversity.

The Special Program approval ended on December 31, 2010. In 2011, RFR will develop a comprehensive recruitment and outreach strategy, which will reflect RFR's commitment to increased diversity and build upon the progress already realized. This strategy will guide RFR to better serve our diverse community in a number of ways such as:

- improved communications; more employees with second languages.
- demonstrating increased respect, awareness and understanding of the demographics and various cultures in Richmond.
- enhanced relationships with all community groups.
- listening and responding to what different cultures expect from RFR.

RFR has made significant strides since the Paish report and Ready order were written. A comprehensive recruitment and outreach strategy will help to firmly establish RFR as a true leader in the Fire Service.



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