



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** Community Safety Committee  
**From:** John McGowan  
Fire Chief, Richmond Fire-Rescue

**Date:** September 26, 2011  
**File:** 09-5000-01/2011-Vol  
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**Re:** Fire 20/20 Recruiting and Retaining for Diversity Workshop – Status Report

### Staff Recommendation

That the Fire 20/20 Recruiting and Retaining for Diversity Workshop Status Report, dated September 26, 2011 from the Fire Chief, be received for information

John McGowan  
Fire Chief, Richmond Fire-Rescue  
(604-303-2734)

<b>FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY</b>		
<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>		
<b>REVIEWED BY TAG</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>REVIEWED BY CAO</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

## Staff Report

### Origin

On July 25, 2011 Council approved Richmond Fire Rescue hosting a Fire 20/20 workshop on September 15 and 16, 2011, entitled "Recruiting and Retaining Diversity in the Fire Service". Community Safety Committee requested that *they be updated on the results of the workshop*. This report provides that update.

The report is in support of the Council term goals to:

*"The City will have a stable, effective, and knowledgeable workforce to serve Council and the community now and in the future through sound recruitment and retention processes."*

and

*"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 discussions with Council on the implementation of change in the culture of Richmond Fire Rescue."*

### Findings Of Fact

The 20/20 workshop was supported and opened by the Fire Commissioner Becky Denlinger, who welcomed participants from seven Lower Mainland Fire Departments and the British Columbia Justice Institute. Teams participating in the workshop included Richmond, Surrey, New Westminster, City of North Vancouver, North Vancouver District, Abbotsford, and Vancouver. The two-day workshop was developed to discuss, develop and learn new strategies to recruit and retain qualified, diverse and inclusive firefighters.

The teams were strategically composed of stakeholders and leaders who are able to influence and commit to the strategies or who could contribute pertinent information to develop strategies. The teams were composed of fire chiefs, chief officers, labour representatives, recruitment officers, diverse fire fighters and human resource personnel. Richmond was fortunate as the host department to have two teams.

The first highlight of the workshop were the adult and youth diversity panels. The goal of these panels were to bring stakeholders into the workshop to directly share their cultural knowledge, perspectives, needs, and creative ideas about how to more effectively work with them in partnership to recruit and retain a qualified, diverse and inclusive workforce. Richmond Fire Rescue realized the importance of the community engagement in outreach and recruitment and therefore confirmed its goal to reflect the need to connect with diverse community groups.

The second highlight was the opportunity to connect with two workshop facilitators and board members of Fire 20/20 who are also internationally know speakers and innovators from the fire service. Fire Chiefs Debra Amesqua and Dave Daniels both have had success in building diverse and inclusive fire departments.

Debra Amesqua, the Madison Wisconsin Fire Chief, has been identified by both labour and management as building one of the most diverse and inclusive departments in the US. She was just named 2011 Fire Chief of the Year (the second woman to ever receive this honour).

Dave Daniels recently retired, rose through the ranks in Seattle and served as fire chief at three departments. Dave co-founded the International Association of Fire Chiefs Health, Safety and Survival Section and is a visionary for the future of the fire service.

Each department team gained a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion, identified their top assets and vulnerabilities and established a specific goal that would move them towards a more inclusive and diverse department. Richmond Fire Rescue concluded that it is now time to shift the focus to community outreach and developing inclusivity within the department.


The workshop validated that, in the continuum of building a diverse and inclusive department, Richmond Fire Rescue has been successful in recruiting and retaining for diversity, however now needs to spend more energy on inclusion and community engagement.

### **Financial Impact**

There are no financial impacts for Fire Rescue associated with this report.

### **Conclusion**

The workshop was inspiring, informative and produced new ideas and initiatives that the cities can work on together. Richmond Fire-Rescue will be a better department that provides excellent service if we have the capacity to serve a diverse community. Having the capacity ensures we have employees who can speak the languages, understand our customers' cultures, have trusting relationships and have diverse perspectives in meeting both today's and tomorrow's challenges.



Kim Howell  
Deputy Chief - Administration  
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