



To: Community Safety Committee

Date: October 11th, 2007

From: Phyllis Carlyle
General Manager

File: 09-5140-01/2007-Vol 01

Re: Future Fire Service Model for British Columbia

Staff Recommendation

1. That the Solicitor General be requested to provide an opportunity for meaningful consultation into any future model for the Fire Service, with the Councils and the Chief Administrative Officers from municipalities providing service to populations of over 100,000.

Phyllis Carlyle
General Manager
Law and Community Safety

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REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEWED BY CAO	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

In 2006 the Fire Chiefs' Association of B.C. embarked on a project to develop a new Fire Service Model and vision for the delivery of fire services in the Province. A steering committee appointed by the Fire Chiefs' Association of B.C. oversees the project on behalf of the Association. The Fire Chiefs' Association steering committee has formed a Fire Service Liaison Group (FSLG) composed of representatives from:

1. the Fire Chiefs' Association of BC
2. the Fire Prevention Officers of BC
3. the Fire Training Officers of BC
4. the BC Professional Fire Fighters Association
5. the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association of BC and
6. the Union of British Columbia Municipalities

The FSLG has identified 17 areas to be examined and has created 17 task groups each to consist of representatives from the above noted organizations. The Task Groups are:

1. Definition of a Fire Department
2. Governance/Legislation/Code Enforcement
3. Funding
4. Training/Certification/Standards
5. Fire Record Management System
6. Investigations
7. Inspections
8. Service Coverage Gaps
9. Interoperability
10. Fire First Responder/Rescue
11. Regionalization and Uniformity of Service
12. Firefighter Safety/WorkSafe BC
13. Interagency Issues/First nations
14. Communications/Dispatch/911
15. Special Projects (Olympics, etc.)
16. Public Education
17. Diversity, Recruitment and Retention

The project structure has been supported by the Office of the Fire Commissioner and the project is funded, in part, by the Solicitor General. KPMG is managing the project.

Analysis

The structure for the project to date has proven to be unwieldy and requires further refinement. Municipal representation on the 17 task groups has not taken place and not all of the 17 task groups have engaged in meaningful consultation or completed final reports.

Richmond Fire Rescue (RFR) has participated in this project through representation on the task group reporting on diversity, recruiting and retention. Participation on this task group has proven beneficial to RFR and resulted in best practices exchanges amongst the participants.

A second and more important benefit of participating in the process has been the ability to identify the limited consultation with the municipal sector the existing project structure permits. Richmond staff, along with staff from several other cities, is of the opinion that the project if continued in its current form will not provide a clear, successful vision for the future.

Results from the review have the potential for a significant impact on the services provided to the public, as well as the budgets and operations of municipalities throughout the Province. It may have been assumed that the potential for the inclusion of UBCM members on each of the task groups would provide adequate representation for the municipal sector. Not all of the task groups have UBCM representation, and further, of those that do, many of the representatives are from smaller communities.

Councils and Chief Administrative Officers of the larger cities should have the opportunity to provide early, meaningful input into any modifications to the fire service model. As well, the Fire Chiefs of the Province should be making recommendations on the future model, structure and delivery of fire services in British Columbia with the input and direction from their respective Councils and Chief Administrative Officers.

While the Fire Chiefs' initiative to create a vision for the fire service of British Columbia is laudable, an alternative method of conducting a review of the fire service to be considered is for an independent consultant to conduct the preliminary fact finding review. An independent consultant would have the ability to acquire unbiased input from all stakeholders, conduct research into best practices from other fire services and then, after receiving feedback through meaningful, fulsome consultation with the municipal sector – including Councils and Chief Administrative Officers, recommend a future vision and model for the fire service.

Financial Impact

No financial impact.

Conclusion

The model for the future of the fire service in B.C. will have a significant impact on the public and the importance of the early, meaningful input from large city municipal Councils and City Administrative Officers cannot be understated.

October 11th, 2007

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geoff Lake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Geoff Lake
Deputy Chief
(2734)

GL:gl