

JUN 16 2020

Referred To cao/leair

HAWKINS LAKE



V.F.F.A.

Hawkins Lake Volunteer Firefighters Association
Box 36
Eagle Creek, BC
V0K 1L0

June 10, 2020

Margo Wagner, Chair
Cariboo Regional District
180 D North 3rd Avenue
Williams Lake, BC
V2G 2A4

Dear Margo

Subject: Funding for Independent Fire Halls

We are writing in response to the recent decision of the Cariboo Regional District to cease grants to independent fire departments. We object to this decision.

The Hawkins Lake Volunteer Firefighters Association was established in 1989 "to provide an initial attack system for forest and structure fires within a five-mile radius of the junction of Eagle Creek Road and Sellars Road." The Association is governed by the BC Societies Act and the Bylaws in the Act.

We are an independent fire department. Our operating budget comes from annual dues and donations from members and from our own local fundraising efforts.

From time to time we receive cash or in-kind donations from service organizations or charities. Most recently these donations have come from the Forest Grove Legion, the 100 Mile Lions, the Red Cross, Cariboo Proud, and through the Community Resiliency Program.

Also, from time to time we apply for grants from provincial (Gaming), regional (CRD) and community bodies. These grants are limited to specific projects and for the purchase of equipment or supplies.

We do not believe that the occasional grant, cash donation or in-kind gift establish any ongoing legal obligations between the HLVFA and the various donors.

We acknowledge that the "delivery of fire services is a local authority function" but we point out that the CRD is not responsible for maintaining the HLVFA. It never has been.

The fire services that exist in the regional district are a hybrid collection of fire departments and "there are different categories of volunteer firefighting service in the CRD", but it does not follow that some departments should be excluded from applying for grants because they are categorized as independent. These may be the very departments that need such support the most.

Grants should be available to all fire departments. These grants indeed are taxpayers' money and it is the taxpayer who benefits from the protection and services provided by the departments.

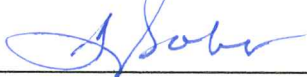
We do not expect that the CRD is responsible for the actions of our Association or our members. However, it must be acknowledged that "the whole of the region" *might* be deemed responsible for the decisions or actions of *any* department within its jurisdiction at *some* time. In our minds the cessation of grants does not prevent nor mitigate nor reduce potential liability.

The cessation of grants does not at all nor in any way, address the "uncertainty as to responsibility for VFDs in the regional district". There must be other avenues, legislative and otherwise for the CRD to deal with this uncertainty.

Finally, we request that the CRD reconsider its decision to "cease to provide funding to 10 independent volunteer fire departments". And further, we ask the CRD to rescind the decision.

In the interim we propose that a Memorandum of Understanding be drafted releasing the CRD from potential liability and that this MoU accompany any future funding by the regional district to our fire department.

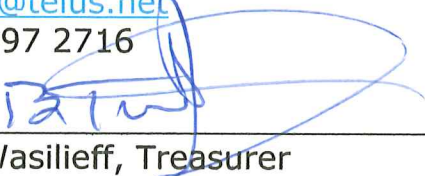
Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Hawkins Lake Volunteer Firefighters Association



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