



Big Lake Volunteer Fire/Rescue

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July 2, 2020

Joel Bruneski
Fire Chief
Big Lake Fire/Rescue
4315 Parker Dr.
Big Lake, BC
V0L 1G0

Margo Wagner, Chair
Cariboo Regional District

Dear Margo,

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude for the work you and the rest of the CRD Directors do on behalf of the district. The time and energy that is put into the many projects is greatly appreciated by the communities in the area. I understand there are some legal concerns that are worrying you with regard to supporting the independent departments. That's understandable. I have concerns in my position as Fire Chief and I try to protect myself as best I can. I would like to be able to explore options to alleviate this concern regarding the Grant for Assistance. For example, what does the Cross-Country Ski Club do differently that we may be able to emulate?

Over the past 25 years the Big Lake Volunteer Fire/Rescue has enjoyed an excellent relationship with the CRD and have received wonderful support. Though we have never been a CRD directed department, it has been recognized that our residences do pay the same base tax and should, therefore, enjoy the exact same support as other communities, with the exclusion of a CRD funded fire department. This support has been in the way of inclusion in the First Responder program, inclusion in the annual Fire Chief Workshop, and coverage of 911 service in our community.

Over the past 25 years we have looked into becoming a CRD department several times but each time it was decided against for several reasons. One is that we cover a large area and that would be drastically reduced to conform to CRD requirements. The other reason was a recommendation by the CRD at the time not to go that route because we were already well established with equipment and training and therefore did not need a significant budget increase.

Over the past several years I have noticed what seems like a slow and gradual withdrawal of support to the independent departments. What I have noticed is a reduction in communication from the CRD, less inclusion and notification of events and training opportunities in the area. Exclusion from the First Responder agreement between the CRD and OHM Medical. Now the loss of the grants from the CRD.

I am not saying we wish to be getting services for nothing. We are willing to pay our way for our training and inclusion in the First Responder agreement etc., but that has not been an option. Big Lake Fire/Rescue has funded itself through BC Gaming Grants and other fundraisers for 25 years and we have done pretty well. We have a fleet of 4 trucks, the newest being a 2018 pumper we purchased new.

I would like to be able to continue our good operating relationship with the CRD through appropriate communication and inclusion into events that not only enhance our fire department but also the surrounding departments through networking and collaboration of sharing ideas and strategies. Please recognize my concern for the direction these things have been going as of late. As mentioned, we are willing to pay our way for training, but we have not been included in the notification of these events.

This has been a very busy year for everyone, but I would love to sit down with you sometime and discuss how we can move forward from here. I look forward to working with you.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Joel Bruneski
Fire Chief

cc. Maureen LeBourdais, Area F Director, CRD
Coralee Oaks, MLA
Bee Hooker, President, Big Lake Community Association