

**Tyee Lake Community Association
6004 Guide Road,
Williams Lake, B.C. V2G 4Y9**

VIA EMAIL: mwagner@cariboord.ca

July 6, 2020

Ms. Margo Wagner, Chair
Cariboo Regional District
180D North 3rd Avenue,
Williams Lake, B.C. V2G 2A4

Dear. Ms. Wagner;

RE: Cancellation of Support for Independent Volunteer Fire Halls

As the Tyee Lake Community Association and Volunteer Fire Department, we are writing you to record our objections regarding the decision to stop all funding to Independent Volunteer Fire Halls within the Cariboo Regional District.

The decision to cease funding was made by the District without discussion, consultation, or communication with the affected departments/associations. This lack of discussion would have provided the various Halls and Associations the ability to address the liability concerns expressed by the District. With no input from the affected organizations, fundamental fact finding was bypassed and participation in the process of decision making with the democratically elected Cariboo Regional District was not afforded to the people and organizations involved.

Most if not all Volunteer Fire Departments carry liability insurance – in particular, Tyee Lake does. In addition, we have coverage with WorkSafeBC. Documentation is available for both these insurances. As a Society, Tyee Lake also carries Directors' Insurance and these documents are also available for your perusal.

There was a suggestion that the Regional District has concerns regarding training levels of our volunteers. A simple request to review training records could have addressed this. Our Fire Chief has over thirty (30) years of experience as a trained firefighter and chief and is fully accredited. He also conducts our training in accordance with accepted BC Fire Service Minimum Training Standards Playbook and the requirements of the BC Wildfire Service (\$100 yearly qualification for all volunteers is mandatory). Just prior to the Coronavirus outbreak, we were in the process of planning for First Aid Training; this will be done once the pandemic eases, if we can afford to proceed. It is mystifying to our Association how the Regional District would be liable when we continue to train to these standards.

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Ms. M. Wagner, CRD Chair

It should also be noted that our VFD does not respond to structure fires other than to prevent spread. One would think that limiting the spread of wildfires would be applauded rather than having a grant that would allow us to upgrade current equipment and personal protective equipment for our volunteers, cancelled by the District. The Tyee Lake Volunteer Fire Department located the Forest Lake wildfire on July 7th, 2017 while on patrol, and successfully fought it on our own until July 13th when the Wildfire Services were able to attend, and then continued to fight alongside WFS until we were all evacuated on July 15th. This alone saved the Province and BC Hydro a large amount of potential damage to various power structures in the area.

With the pandemic, all fundraising events and donation efforts have had to be cancelled. These are the only other methods of raising funds to continue to pay for insurances, PPE, equipment upgrades, volunteer training, etc. Having the opportunity to apply for the Cariboo Regional District grant for equipment and training costs cancelled has now jeopardized much of what we are able to do, and from our perspective, is unconscionable in view of the number of fires we attend to. We feel that there should be an opportunity for our Association to apply for funds from the taxpayer dollars that go directly to the Regional District.

Volunteer Fire Departments in all rural areas of B.C. supply an invaluable service to residents in those areas including information updates, disaster/evacuation coordination, and firefighting for our communities that would otherwise be left unprotected.

In view of the training and insurances our Society maintains for our volunteers that addresses any liability issues the District may have, we respectfully request that the Regional District review the cancellation of the grants to Non-Profit Societies. The services offered by our Volunteer Fire Department cannot be duplicated by the Regional District.

Sincerely,

Original signed by Maureen Straza

Maureen Straza, President
Tyee Lake Community Association.

Original signed by Rick Jelley

Rick Jelley, Fire Chief
TL Volunteer Fire Department.

MS/RJ:kmc

Pc: file; Coralee Oakes, coralee.oakes.mla@leg.bc.ca; Steve Forseth, sforseth@cariboord.bc.ca