



February 6, 2026

The Honourable Brenda Bailey, M.L.A.
Minister of Finance
Email: FIN.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: Sustainable Funding for BC Search and Rescue Organizations

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the Regional District of Nanaimo's Board of Directors, I am writing to request that the Province of British Columbia work in collaboration with the BC Search and Rescue Association and local governments to establish a long-term, predictable search and rescue funding model.

Search and rescue services are an invaluable asset to the citizens of British Columbia, with 78 search and rescue groups and 3200 volunteers providing emergency response on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. These dedicated volunteers play a critical role in ensuring the safety and well-being of British Columbians, often risking their own lives in dangerous and unpredictable conditions and often contributing their own financial resources to purchase equipment.

Although search and rescue is a provincially mandated emergency service, it does not have stable and secure provincial operating funding. Local governments across the Province have been calling for reliable search and rescue funding for two decades, as reflected in resolutions passed by the Union of BC Municipalities. The need for stable funding has only increased with an expanding population and growth in the tourism industry across the Province. Relying on homeowners through property taxation is a regressive, inequitable, and unsustainable funding model, especially during a housing-cost crisis.

To establish equitable funding across the Province, search and rescue funding should be indexed to measurable operational metrics, based on the varying needs of the different search and rescue organizations. These metrics could include call volume, training and certification standards, equipment lifecycle needs, and volunteer readiness benchmarks.

Finally, we request that the Province increase the BC Volunteer First Responder Tax Credit to match the federal government's increased tax exemption. This low-cost, high-impact measure would support volunteer retention, recruitment, morale, and long-term sustainability for search and rescue volunteers, volunteer firefighters, Emergency Support Services teams, and other first-responder volunteers. Matching the federal tax credit would

demonstrate the Province's commitment to these essential first responders, acknowledging their invaluable contributions and sacrifices and providing a more meaningful financial recognition of their service.

Sincerely,



Stuart McLean, Chair

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cc: The Honourable Kelly Greene, M.L.A. – Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, EMCR.Minister@gov.bc.ca
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