



MEMBER NOTICE

**TO: Mayor and Council
Chair and Regional Board
Administrator**

FROM: Gary MacIsaac, Executive Director

DATE: December 18, 2008

**RE: REPORT ON NEW MODEL FOR DELIVERY
OF FIRE SERVICES**

This memorandum is being forwarded to UBCM member local governments for your input. We would appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have concerning the report.

The Fire Services Liaison Group (FSLG – Fire Services Model Project) has released a draft report on its new model for the delivery of fire services. The FSLG is looking to obtain input on the report by January 31, 2009, so that it consider potential changes and fine tune the report.

Attached is a list of the 36 recommendations made in the report. A copy of the draft report prepared by the Fire Services Liaison Group entitled “Proposed Fire/Rescue Service Model” can be found on the UBCM web page: www.civicnet.bc.ca.

If you or your local government has any comments or input related to the information, please forward your comments to Ken Vance at the UBCM office in Richmond at 604-270-8226 (ext. 114) or at kvance@civicnet.bc.ca.

RECOMMENDATIONS – PROPOSED FIRE / RESCUE SYSTEM MODEL

ELEMENT 1: ESTABLISH COMMON VISION

RECOMMENDATION

The following vision statement should be adopted by the Fire / Rescue System in British Columbia:

“To have a competent level of fire and emergency services that is supported by sustainable resources for all residents of and visitors to the province of British Columbia”

Element 2: Fire Service is the “Fire / Rescue System”

RECOMMENDATION

The “Fire Service” should be recognized as the “Fire / Rescue System”.

BACKGROUND

Traditional “fire services” included structural fire suppression, fire investigation, fire inspections, and public education about fire safety. Many departments have added a range of rescue and emergency services, including:

Medical first responder

Road rescue

Hazardous material response

Technical rescue services, including high angle rescue, enclosed space rescue, swift water rescue, etc.

Element 3: Local Government Autonomy

RECOMMENDATION

The new Model recognizes that the existing policy that provision of fire / rescue services are “permissive” for local governments (i.e., are not mandatory) should be continued.

That is, local governments (i.e., municipalities and regional districts) may determine:

If they wish to establish or maintain a fire / rescue department

The form and nature of any fire / rescue department they may decide to establish, e.g., career or volunteer, internal department or contracted services

The range of fire and rescue services that the department will provide

The service areas where fire and other services are to be provided

The response time targets for providing fire and rescue services

Funding and funding mechanisms

BACKGROUND

Local governments retain their autonomy about decisions regarding whether and where fire and rescue services will be delivered within their jurisdictions and how such services

will be funded. In particular, local governments are free to decide not to provide such services.

The Fire Services Liaison group strongly recommends that local governments ensure all incorporated communities have, at a minimum, a fire / rescue department capable of mounting an exterior attack on structure fires.

Local government autonomy does not extend to mandated standards for firefighter safety and training. This restriction on local autonomy is a continuation of the present situation.

Element 4: Local Government Responsibility for Fire / Rescue Departments

RECOMMENDATION

Municipalities should be responsible for all fire / rescue departments within their jurisdictions, other than industrial, federal government, and First Nations departments. Regional districts should be responsible for all other fire / rescue departments (except industrial, federal, and First Nations departments).

The Fire Services Liaison Group recognizes this element of the proposed Model will require a long time to achieve. It is important that local governments have the time needed to effect this change in an orderly manner. However, the principle that fire / rescue services are provided by government is an important one that should guide the ongoing evolution of the Fire / Rescue System.

RESPONSIBILITY

Local governments are responsible for local fire / rescue departments

Provincial government should amend the *Fire Services Act* and other enactments as necessary to provide statutory support for this element

ELEMENT 5: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

RECOMMENDATION

Local government (i.e., municipalities and regional districts) should, for each fire / rescue department in their jurisdiction (other than industrial, federal, and First Nations departments), annually publish service plans that document the fire and rescue services to be provided, the zone or zones where the services will be delivered, and the response time targets for each service. Fire / rescue department service plans should be public documents.

RESPONSIBILITY

The provincial government is responsible for mandating local government responsibility for fire / rescue departments

Local governments are accountable for service provision decisions

ELEMENT 6: AMEND THE FIRE SERVICES ACT

RECOMMENDATION

As part of its existing plans to revise and update the *Fire Services Act*, the provincial government should include amending the Act to enable implementation of the proposed Fire / Rescue System Model.

Element 7: Establish a Fire Services Advisory Board

RECOMMENDATION

A Fire Services Advisory Board (“FSAB”) should be appointed to provide province-wide policy leadership and coordination for the Fire / Rescue System. The board should consist of representatives of stakeholders with operating or governance roles in the Fire / Rescue System. The Fire Services Advisory Board should be chaired by the Fire Commissioner. The Board should be permanent, meet regularly and be appropriately funded.

Element 8: Fire Commissioner Mandate to Include Rescue Services

RECOMMENDATION

The Fire Commissioner’s advisory/coordination mandate should be expanded to include the full range of rescue services in addition to fire services.

Element 9: Education of Stewards

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the Fire Commissioner and the Fire Services Advisory Board should develop educational material for local government officials on fire and rescue related issues.

RESPONSIBILITY

The Fire Services Advisory Board should create a working group from the Fire / Rescue System and local governments to develop educational materials

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities should make the educational materials available to local government elected officials and managers

Element 10: OFC Research Role

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the Fire Commissioner should research fire, rescue and emergency services trends and issues to develop a fact base for effective Fire / Rescue System decision-making.

Element 11: Gaps in Service Coverage

RECOMMENDATION

Decisions about where services are provided and where they are not should be documented by the Office of the Fire Commissioner and made available to the emergency services and public safety community and to the public.

Element 12: Services Provided to Provincial Agencies

RECOMMENDATION

The provincial government and the Fire Services Advisory Board should undertake a joint study to examine the impact on fire / rescue departments of services provided to provincial government agencies and areas under provincial government jurisdiction along with the compensation paid for these services.

The results of the joint study should form the basis for ensuring the relationships are appropriately beneficial to both parties for each service.

Element 13: Improved Liability Protection

RECOMMENDATION

Fire / rescue departments, their personnel, their local municipal and regional district administrators and elected officials should be protected against liability claims or actions arising from the good faith performance of their functions, duties or powers. This is particularly important to smaller departments when providing out-of-boundary service.

Element 14: Work with BC Ambulance Service to Reduce Gaps

RECOMMENDATION

The Fire / Rescue System and the B.C. Ambulance Service should develop a joint strategy to reduce performance gaps in emergency medical first responder service, especially in northern B.C. and rural areas. This project should consider both risks to public safety (as a result of gaps in coverage) and efficiency considerations (i.e., which agencies can most cost effectively reduce risks to public safety).

Element 15: Local Fire Bylaws

RECOMMENDATION

The provincial government should support local governments in enactment of bylaws covering fire prevention, fire detection, fire mitigation, and building codes, including sprinkler systems and other mitigation strategies.

Element 16: Improve Fire Investigation

RECOMMENDATION

The fire investigation system should be reengineered to ensure that investigations in all communities are timely and appropriate.

Element 17: Improve Fire Inspection

RECOMMENDATION

The fire inspection system should be reengineered to ensure that inspections are appropriately undertaken in all communities, are efficiently delivered, and to address liability concerns. In particular, an improved fire inspection system should ensure that all schools, hospitals, and other public buildings in the province are inspected.

Element 18: Improve Public Education

RECOMMENDATION

A province-wide fire safety public education strategy should be implemented.

Element 19: Trusted Service Providers

RECOMMENDATION

Registered and certified fire / rescue departments should be “trusted providers” under the Provincial Emergency Program.

Element 20: First Nations & Other Emergency Services Providers

RECOMMENDATION

The Fire / Rescue System should seek opportunities to cooperate with First Nations fire / rescue organizations and other emergency services providers.

Element 21: Improving Adherence to Competency Standards

RECOMMENDATION

The Fire Services Advisory Board and the Fire Commissioner should take immediate action to clarify and specify training standards for fire and rescue services, specifically regarding identification of mandatory requirements. In the longer term, mandatory competency standards should be established for core fire / rescue services.

In particular, the Fire Services Advisory Board and the Fire Commissioner should immediately address the standards that apply to interior firefighting. This standard must consider both the competencies required for interior attack and the current capabilities of the many small fire / rescue departments in the province.

The Fire Services Advisory Board and the Fire Commissioner should also develop a strategy that allows fire / rescue departments, where needed, to improve competencies to adhere to standards.

RESPONSIBILITY

Local governments are responsible for ensuring fire / rescue departments upgrade their capabilities to meet mandated standards

The Fire Services Advisory Board is responsible for recommending competency standards to the Fire Commissioner

Caveat: Mandatory standards, especially for interior firefighting, should only be implemented once the training system and funding for volunteers is improved to required levels and departments have had a reasonable opportunity to improve competencies (see Element 32)

Element 22: Fire / Rescue Department Registration & Certification

RECOMMENDATION

All fire / rescue departments (other than federal and First Nations departments) should be registered with and certified by the standards enforcement authority.

Element 23: Improve Training Delivery

RECOMMENDATION

The system to deliver training to firefighters should be improved in order to ensure all firefighters and fire / rescue departments are able to meet provincially-mandated standards.

Element 24: Leadership and Management Training

RECOMMENDATION

A leadership and management training program for fire / rescue departments should be implemented.

Element 25: Best Practices Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the Fire Commissioner and the Fire Services Advisory Board should develop, publish, and promote “best practices” guidelines for fire and rescue services. A best practices guideline for risk assessment / risk management should be an early priority.

Element 26: Improve Fire / Rescue Information

RECOMMENDATION

The currency, completeness, and accuracy of information about the Fire / Rescue System and the delivery of its services should be improved.

Element 27: Improve Interoperability

RECOMMENDATION

The Fire / Rescue System and local governments should undertake initiatives to improve interoperability. The Fire Services Advisory Board and the Office of the Fire Commissioner should provide leadership to assist departments and local governments in this.

Element 28: Efficiency Initiatives

RECOMMENDATION

Fire / rescue departments and local governments should encourage efficiency improvement initiatives in the three different circumstances created by population/development patterns within the province:

The metropolitan Vancouver and Victoria areas

The regional urban / suburban situation (outside of Vancouver and Victoria)

The rural / small communities situation

RESPONSIBILITY

Fire / rescue departments and local governments are responsible for finding and implementing efficiency improvements

The Fire Services Advisory Board should work with representatives of local government and the Fire / Rescue System to identify potential efficiency improvement projects

Responsibility for specific projects will depend on the specific projects identified

Element 29: Communications and Information Management

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the Fire Commissioner and the Fire Services Advisory Board should establish a working group to develop specific recommendations for improving communications and information management systems in the Fire / Rescue System.

Three phases of work are required to develop a detailed plan are (i) baseline analysis, (ii) gap analysis, and (iii) project definition.

Element 30: Linked Regional Records Management Systems

RECOMMENDATION

The provincial government should fund a project to evaluate the feasibility of linked regional records management systems.

Element 31: Equipment Standardization & Joint Purchasing

RECOMMENDATION

A purchasing cooperative (or other appropriate legal vehicle) should be established to purchase trucks, equipment, apparatus, etc. on behalf of participating fire / rescue departments.

RESPONSIBILITY

Local government is responsible for the equipment standardization

The Fire Services Advisory Board is responsible for developing recommended practices for equipment with the support of the Office of the Fire Commissioner. The Fire Services Advisory Board is also responsible for facilitating the establishment of a purchasing cooperative vehicle

Element 32: Province to Fund Volunteer Training

RECOMMENDATION

The provincial government should fund mandated training of volunteer firefighters. The provincial trades training system provides a model that could be applied to volunteer training.

Element 33: Recruitment / Retention Programs

RECOMMENDATION

The Fire Services Advisory Board with the support of the Office of the Fire Commissioner should develop volunteer recruitment and retention programs that local governments and fire / rescue departments may adopt.

Local governments should assist departments recruit and retain volunteer firefighters.

Element 34: Recruitment / Retention Incentives

RECOMMENDATION

The provincial government should provide tax or other incentives to encourage volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention. Incentives for both volunteers and employers (to release employees to respond to calls) need to be considered. Additionally, incentives should be structured to recruit volunteers from non-traditional groups.

Local governments should also consider providing incentives to volunteer firefighters and their employers.

Element 35: Local Government Administration and Management Support

RECOMMENDATION

Local governments should ensure that volunteer fire / departments within their jurisdiction have necessary administrative and management support.

Element 36: OFC Focus on Small Departments

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the Fire Commissioner should create a specific unit to assist small departments address the trends, issues, and challenges within that sector of the Fire / Rescue System.