



Columbia Shuswap Regional District

Fire Services Review:

Governance, Structure and Administrative Systems

**Dave Mitchell & Associates Ltd.
January 2009**

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1. Background

The Columbia Shuswap Regional District (the “CSRD”) is one of 29 regional districts in British Columbia.¹ It encompasses some 30,180 square kilometres (11,652 square miles) and, in 2007, had an estimated full time population of slightly more than 53,000, most of whom live within 4 major communities (Salmon Arm, Sicamous, Revelstoke and Golden)². The unincorporated portions of the CSRD are divided into six Electoral Areas, with a permanent population of some 20,000. As a major tourist and resort destination, however, the population in many areas relevant to this study can swell to ten times the number of permanent residents.³

The CSRD currently has 13 separate fire suppression service areas (“Fire Suppression Areas”), each with its own volunteer fire department, provided as a local service by the CSRD. Each department has a separate budget and tax base, and is administered by a volunteer fire suppression committee (“FSC”). There are a total of 14 fire halls, some 45 major pieces of apparatus and approximately 225 volunteer fire fighters.⁴ Over the past 3 years, the average annual budget for these local fire services has been just under \$1.8 million, a figure that is expected to rise significantly over the next five years.⁵ In addition, there are three Fire Suppression Areas which receive services through contract from adjacent municipalities, and fire suppression services are provided by the CSRD to portions of the Little Shuswap Indian Band territory and to a specified area in the Regional District of North Okanagan.

¹ Source: <http://www.civicnet.bc.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?PageID=88#RD>, accessed on 12 September 2008.

² Source: BCStats, “Columbia Shuswap Regional District: Community Facts”, accessed at <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/dd/facsheet/CF100.pdf> on 17 July 2008. This represents between a 6%-10% increase in population from the 2001 Census (the 2001 Census showed a population of 48,219, which suggests a 10% increase; BCStats appears to have adjusted this number upwards to approximately 50,300, likely to deal with a Census undercount). See also, “Overview of Columbia Shuswap Regional District”, accessed on 17 July 2008 at <http://www.csrld.bc.ca/ecdev/PDF1/OverviewCSRDL.pdf>.

³ Source: Facilitated discussions with Fire Chiefs and Officers, April 2008.

⁴ Fire Suppression Co-ordinator, *2007 Fire Services Annual Report*, p.6; CSRD Fire Services Review, “Terms of Reference”, 2007, at p.5.

⁵ Average expenditures derived from information provided by CSRD Financial Services for the years 2006 - 2008. The projected collective budgets for the period from 2009 – 2012 are expected to rise to an average of approximately \$2.4 million/year, as a result of necessary capital equipment investments and regulatory compliance. Source: CSRD Fire Services 5 year budgets, current as of 19 March 2008.

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Although the bylaws governing the operation of the CSRD's fire services were reviewed and updated in 1999⁶, the underlying model for delivering those services is over thirty years old. At the time of its establishment, the structure met the needs of the communities it served: it enabled the development of new suppression areas on the basis of petition by local residents and provided a basic level of service at a minimal cost.

Since that time, the CSRD has seen significant growth and expects the rate of development to continue to increase over the coming years. In addition, there have been substantial changes in the legal and regulatory context governing fire services, including rising standards for equipment and training, growing risk management concerns, stricter occupational health and safety regulations, and increasing potential liability for the operation of the service. These developments make it timely to conduct an organizational review to ensure that the governance model, structure, and services are able to meet changing demands and safely deliver an effective fire service to the residents of the CSRD.

The current Fire Services Review was commissioned to analyze and consider the governance, structure and administrative systems of the CSRD's fire service. It should be emphasized that a full operational review has not been conducted, as that was outside the scope of the requested work. However, in the context of developing recommendations for updating the organizational model of the fire services, current and anticipated operational issues, challenges and concerns were documented and considered.

⁶ In 1999, the establishment bylaws were updated to convert each into a "local service", the bylaw governing the Fire Suppression Committees was updated and a bylaw specifying operational criteria for CSRD fire departments was passed. The basic structure of the system, however, was not altered.

2. Executive Summary

Fire Service delivery within the Columbia Shuswap Regional District is currently based on a model that was developed in the 1970's and which is essentially unchanged since that time. In the ensuing 30 years, the CSRD has grown in terms of population and development to the point where it has become prudent to review the underlying model and determine the degree to which this model is meeting the needs of its citizens and fire fighters.

The CSRD outlined its requirement for a review and identified the need to examine the existing governance and reporting structure and to recommend changes to increase its effectiveness in recognition of regional growth as well as evolving standards of service and the regulatory framework that applies. The Regional District also wished to consider the implementation of additional services, in particular inspections, prevention and public education.

The consultation process commenced in February 2008 and included meetings with the Fire Chiefs and deputies from each of the 13 volunteer departments, representatives of each of the FSCs⁷, CSRD staff from Works Services, Finance and Planning, and the CSRD Board. The meetings conducted with each of these groups were very positive. The exchange of ideas and concerns was always professional and congenial.

The process demonstrated a genuine commitment by all of the participants to improving the fire service across the region, with little evidence of overt "territoriality". In general, there was a pronounced ability to see the "big picture" issues that affected the region as a whole, while still being able to articulate particular concerns affecting specific Fire Suppression Areas or fire departments. The participants were supportive of the process and understood the need for undertaking the present review.

From the work undertaken, the Consultants have put forward 13 major recommendations. In developing these, the Consultants conducted a complete review of the existing governance and administrative structure, obtained input from a broad cross-section of interested parties, carried out a benchmarking exercise with other regional

⁷ Other than Nicholson, which participated through a detailed and helpful written submission.

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districts and a county in another province, and reviewed the relevant legal and regulatory issues and acceptable standards relating to the delivery of fire services in British Columbia. In addition, issues related to the development of a fire prevention / education and fire inspection service were researched.

The recommendations which have been developed from this process seek to create a structure that has the flexibility to address both current issues and anticipated future developments. An attempt has also been made to provide a rough assessment of any costs or tax-rate changes associated with the major recommendations.

3. Scope of Work and Methodology

3.1. *Scope of Work*

The Scope of Work was defined in the terms of reference (the “Terms of Reference”) developed by the CSRD, and refined in discussions with CSRD staff. The firm of Dave Mitchell & Associates Ltd. (the “Consultants”) was selected to undertake the project. The Consultants have extensive experience advising regional, municipal and provincial governments on issues related to the delivery of emergency services, emergency communications and records management. Further information about the Consultants, including brief resumes of the individuals working on this project, can be found in Appendix A.

The project involved the consideration of the following issues and completion of the following tasks:

- a. Review of the current fire services governance structure and operating environment, including establishment bylaws, operational criteria, mutual aid agreements, reporting authorities, legislative and regulatory requirements, and overall costs.
- b. Develop a consultation program to obtain input from the Fire Chiefs, FSCs, relevant CSRD staff and the CSRD Board.
- c. Review the roles, proficiency requirements and remuneration of the Fire Chiefs.
- d. Review the role of the Fire Services Co-ordinator (the “Co-ordinator”).
- e. Review the role of the FSCs.
- f. Review the current Fire Suppression Area boundaries and issues related to possible integration.
- g. Investigate the possibility of additional funding sources from the Province.
- h. Investigate issues related to the introduction of a fire prevention and education function, and fire inspection role to the CSRD’s mandate.
- i. Develop and conduct a benchmarking exercise with comparable regions.
- j. Develop a report summarizing the findings from the various consultations and investigations, and setting out recommendations for change.

- k. Submit interim report to the CSRD for review; revise report and present final report to the CSRD Board.
- l. Prepare draft bylaws needed to implement the recommendations.

The work plan and scope were refined in the context of discussions with CSRD staff. Those discussions and the Terms of Reference for the project made it clear that the review was not to include the operational aspects of the fire departments or emergency response, or a detailed exploration of future services that could be provided by the fire services. The recommendations, however, are mindful of the current operational issues and challenges that were identified, and are intended to be able to accommodate the addition of further services in the future, if that is determined to be appropriate.

3.2. *Project Methodology*

The review process involved multiple streams of activity, including a complete review of the bylaws and agreements underlying the current CSRD fire services, an active consultation process with interested parties, discussions with various provincial agencies and a benchmarking review of similarly situated local fire services. The principal tasks undertaken include the following:

Document review. A review of the formative documents underlying the current structure of the CSRD fire service, or delivery of those services, including:

- Establishment and related bylaws for each of the 13 volunteer fire departments and FSCs. Related bylaws include the operational criteria for volunteer fire departments (BL 5286) and mutual aid bylaw (BL 5114).
- The previous 12 – 15 months of meeting minutes from each of the FSCs (where such minutes were available).
- All mutual aid agreements.
- All available contracts to supply or receive fire services.

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- Financial information for each department – budget and actual – for the period from 2007 onwards (including budgets to 2012).
- The terms of the Co-ordinator’s position and his role;
- Map sets showing the existing Fire Suppression Area boundaries and fire hall locations.

In the course of the work performed, the Consultants also briefly examined or reviewed the status of training and certification programs for the various fire departments and the operational guidelines and standardized reporting forms developed by the Co-ordinator. A full review of these issues and materials, however, was outside the scope of the project.

Benchmarking Review. A benchmarking exercise was conducted of the governance, structure, remuneration, advancement, and training issues for five other regional districts in British Columbia and one jurisdiction in Alberta. The following areas were compared: Cariboo Regional District, Central Kootenay Regional District, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Kootenay Boundary Regional District and Fraser-Fort George Regional District and Red Deer County in Alberta;

Fire Prevention / Education. A template of standards and requirements (staffing, training, promoting, legal issues) was developed related to implementing a fire prevention/public education function;

Review Potential Sources of Provincial Funding. Using the document “Building Stronger Communities” as the springboard, the Consultants explored the availability of funding from provincial government agencies to help develop a fire prevention/inspection function and implement other recommendations under this report;

Conduct Consultations with Relevant Parties. Meetings were facilitated with the interested or affected parties to review the matters under consideration. The Consultants met with the following groups:

- the FSCs;

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- the Fire Chiefs & Officers;
- the CSRD Board; and
- CSRD Staff in Works Services, Finance and Planning.

The Co-ordinator was consulted regularly throughout the process and he and other Works Services staff were encouraged to attend each of the facilitated meetings.

Review Criteria for Chiefs' Positions. Criteria establishing minimum proficiency requirements for Chiefs, including any grandfathering or similar provisions, remuneration and training requirements were reviewed and considered.

Develop Appropriate Recommendations. Recommendations on structure, reporting lines and authorities, governance, and required amendments to CSRD bylaws have been developed, based on the work undertaken.

An interim version of the report was reviewed with staff of the Works Services Department. The final version of the report is to be delivered to the Board of the CSRD. Depending on the Board's approach, the final work will involve the development of draft bylaws to implement the relevant recommendations.

4. Current Structure and Challenges of the CSRD Fire Service

4.1. *The Current Structure of the Fire Service*

As noted in the Background section, the underlying model for the delivery of fire services in the CSRD is over thirty years old. To contain costs, and reflect the local initiative required to develop a fire service, the original governance model was deliberately decentralized and emphasized local autonomy. As this report is reviewed and the recommendations considered, however, it needs to be remembered that, notwithstanding the current “decentralized” model, the CSRD is ultimately responsible for the operation of each of the 13 departments, and potentially liable for any negligence or shortcomings of its fire services or their administration.

As an organizational and reporting matter, the CSRD fire services are a division of the Works Services Department of the CSRD, and the Co-ordinator reports directly to the Manager, Works Services. The underlying governing structure for the fire suppression services operated by the CSRD is as follows:⁸

(a) **Establishment Bylaws.**

For each Fire Suppression Area, there is an establishment bylaw setting its boundaries and authorizing the CSRD to provide fire protection services to the residents, the costs of which are borne entirely by the residents of the particular area. Each of these Fire Suppression Areas has been converted to a “local service area” and the provision of fire suppression services is now a “local service” as defined in the *Local Government Act* (BC) (the “LGA”). The first establishment bylaw, for Sorrento/Blind Bay, dates from 1975 while Eagle Bay is the most recently created Fire Suppression Area, having been established in 1990.

(b) **Fire Suppression Committees.**

Immediate responsibility for the administration of each of the 13 departments rests with a fire suppression committee established pursuant to Bylaw 5285. Bylaw 5285 was

⁸ See Appendix J for additional, detailed comments on the bylaws, mutual aid agreements and fire suppression contracts.

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passed in 1999, and replaced “Fire Protection Committee Bylaw 1250”. Under Bylaw 5285, each Fire Suppression Area is mandated to have a separate FSC, and each FSC is required to have five, seven or nine members⁹ (meaning that, region-wide, there are supposed to be a minimum of 65 FSC members, and could be as many as 117). The members sit for two year terms, with approximately half being elected every other year. The FSCs are deemed to be committees of the Regional District. The members of the FSCs are volunteers, although the Secretary and/or Treasurer may be paid a stipend.

Operationally, the FSCs are intended to “provide ratepayer direction in the delivery of fire suppression services”, and are responsible for the financial, administrative and organizational aspects of delivering fire suppression services. They are specifically prohibited from involving themselves in actual operational matters or decisions. Thus, the FSCs are responsible for budget preparation, cash/expenditure management, hall and ground maintenance, occupational health and safety issues related to the premises, and making recommendations to the CSRD on matters such as the appointment or removal of a fire chief, discipline/termination issues at the FSC and Chiefs’ level and recommending changes or additions to existing policies affecting fire suppression services. FSCs are advisory to the CSRD Board.

(c) Fire Department Operational Criteria.

The manner in which the fire departments operate is specified in broad outline in Bylaw 5286, which also was passed in 1999. Under this bylaw:

- a fire department’s jurisdiction is limited to the boundaries of the relevant Fire Suppression Area and the fire apparatus cannot be used beyond those boundaries without the “express authorization of a written contract or agreement providing for the supply of fire suppression services outside those boundaries” (s. 2);
- subject to approval by its FSC, each department is supposed to develop its own rules, regulations and policies governing the use, care and protection of fire department property, the conduct and discipline of its fire fighters and its own Operating Guidelines (s. 3); and

⁹ The number of members required for the FSCs is actually a stipulation of Bylaw 5327, which deals with the structure of CSRD committees.

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- the Fire Chief may assume the responsibilities of the Local Assistant to the Fire Commissioner, subject to FSC and CSRD approval (s. 4).

The bylaw also grants certain powers to each department's Fire Chief (or designate) to enter property where an "Incident" has occurred or is occurring, and order apparatus and crew onto or into such property, or an adjacent property, in order to combat, control or deal with the Incident. "Incident" is defined as "a fire or a situation where a fire or explosion is in progress or imminent and the assistance of the fire department has been requested" (emphasis added).

It should be noted that the powers granted to the Fire Chiefs are narrower than that permitted by the LGA and the *Fire Services Act* (B.C.) (the "Fire Services Act"). The definition of an "Incident", moreover, theoretically requires that the assistance of the fire department be requested before these powers become effective. Both of these issues should be addressed in a revised Operational Criteria Bylaw.

(d) Fire Services Co-ordinator.

The CSRD established the Co-ordinator position in 2002. Initially a contract position, the Co-ordinator is now a CSRD staff position, reporting to the Manager, Works Services. The position description makes the Co-ordinator responsible for a wide variety of tasks relating to the administration, control and enhancement of fire suppression services in the CSRD, including (among other things):

- acting as the Local Assistant to the Fire Commissioner on a region-wide basis;
- developing common standards of reporting, operating guidelines, recruitment, asset inspections, asset management, training and communications;
- coordinating group purchasing of equipment;
- attending meetings of the CSRD Board, the FSCs, and the volunteer departments, as requested or required;
- enhancing inter-department cooperation and communication; and
- coordinating and improving training.

As discussed further below, the Co-ordinator's position overlaps with that of the Fire Chiefs and, to a certain extent, the FSCs.

(e) Contracted Fire Services.

For certain areas, the CSRD has entered into contracts for the supply of fire suppression services from adjacent municipal fire departments. The following areas are covered by these arrangements:

Portions of Electoral Area B: Pursuant to Bylaw 90, passed 21 November 1975, a specified area for fire protection was established in portions of Electoral Area "B". Under this bylaw, the CSRD was authorized to enter into a contract with Revelstoke to arrange for the provision of fire protection for the specified area. The bylaw provides that the service is to be paid by the residents of the specified area "on the basis of assessment fixed for taxation for school purposes". No maximum taxation rate has been set under this bylaw, which does not appear to have been updated since it was originally passed. No contract for services with Revelstoke was provided for review. It should be noted that under Bylaw 90, the CSRD is only authorized to contract for fire protection services with Revelstoke, not provide such services or contract with any other party for such services.

Kault Hill (Electoral Area "C"): Pursuant to Bylaw 5290, dated 16 September 1999, the CSRD established a local service for the provision of fire suppression for Kault Hill, and was authorized to enter into contractual arrangements with Salmon Arm or others for the delivery of such service.

The CSRD has entered into a fire suppression agreement with Salmon Arm relating to fire suppression services for Kault Hill. The agreement relates to the provision of first response for fire suppression services only, and excludes any special services (such as rescue, HazMat or first medical responder) and does not include "prolonged wildland fire incidents". The agreement has a number of stipulations, including: (a) that the Salmon Arm fire chief (or his designate) be appointed as the Local Assistant to the Fire Commissioner for the Kault Hill area; and (b) that the CSRD adopt a bylaw permitting the "officer in command" to order

building demolition in connection with fighting or controlling a fire. This power is not included in the Fire Chief's powers as set out in the Operational Criteria bylaw. The agreement has a five year term expiring 31 December 2009.

“Rural” Sicamous (Electoral Area “E”): Pursuant to Bylaw 5011, dated 29 March 1990, the CSRD repealed an existing fire service bylaw, and established a fire suppression service as a local service within portions of Electoral Area “E”. The CSRD was authorized to enter into contractual arrangements with Sicamous or others for the provision of this service.

The CSRD has entered into a fire suppression agreement with Sicamous in accordance with Bylaw 5011. Under that agreement, Sicamous agrees to provide “Fire Suppression” of a quality and standard comparable to that provided within Sicamous. The cost of the service is the service area's proportionate share of the agreed budget for fire services, based on converted net taxable value of land and improvements for regional hospital district purposes.

North Okanagan: The CSRD has arranged to supply fire suppression services from its Ranchero/Deep Creek Volunteer Fire Department to the “Twin Lakes/Grandview Bench Fire Protection Specified Area” of the Regional District of North Okanagan. The agreement is limited to the provision of fire suppression and excludes any other services (such as highway extrication, first medical responder or fire inspections). The agreement can be terminated by either party on 12 months' notice and has a five year term expiring 31 December 2012.

Little Shuswap Indian Band, North Bay (Tappen) Indian Reserve (the “Reserve”): The CSRD has agreed to supply fire protection services from the Tappen/Sunnybrae Volunteer Fire Department to the Reserve in consideration of the payment of \$100/included structure/year. The provisions of the “Fire Department Operational Criteria” Bylaw 5286 are specifically incorporated as part of the agreement. The service provided includes annual maintenance by the CSRD of the fire hydrants on the Reserve. There are indemnification provisions protecting the CSRD in the event of losses suffered by the Band, except where the losses arise as a result of gross negligence or wilful misconduct. The

agreement has a five year term expiring 31 December 2009, and can be terminated earlier by either party giving 90 days' notice.

Little Shuswap Indian Band, Scotch Creek Indian Reserve Servicing

Agreement: Under this agreement, the CSRD has agreed to supply certain services to those portions of the Reserves which are used, occupied or possessed by non-members of the Band. Fire suppression services are to be supplied to the Scotch Creek and the North Bay reserves on this basis. The agreement has a five year term expiring 31 December 2009. There are no limitations of liability or early termination provisions and, unlike the agreement to provide services to the Reserve discussed above, this agreement does not incorporate by reference the Fire Department Operational Criteria bylaw.

(f) Mutual Aid Agreements.

General Power: Pursuant to Bylaw 5114, dated 18 February 1993, the CSRD is empowered to enter into "mutual aid agreements respecting the use of fire fighting equipment and assistance response equipment and personnel in fire suppression and assistance response inside or outside of the service area."

Specific Mutual Aid Agreements: We were provided with five mutual aid agreements involving CSRD fire departments:

- Malakwa and Swansea Point Fire Departments - District of Sicamous in force until 31 December 2008;
- Nicholson Fire Department - Town of Golden in force until 31 December 2008;
- Rancho/Deep Creek Fire Department – City of Enderby – Shuswap River Improvement District in force until 31 December 2008;
- Rancho/Deep Creek Fire Department – City of Armstrong – Township of Spallumcheen, in force until 31 December 2008; and
- Shuswap Area Fire Departments. This mutual aid agreement covers the Anglemont, Celista, Eagle Bay, Scotch Creek/Lee Creek, Shuswap, Tappen/Sunnybrae and White Lake Volunteer Fire Departments and is in force until 31 May 2010.

The individual agreements are in substantially the same format, with each having a five year term. There is a definition of an “overwhelming situation” which can trigger a mutual aid request (in the agreement with Armstrong and Spallumcheen, the term is “Emergency”), and of the officers in the respective departments who can initiate or respond to a request. A responding department is not required to send equipment and manpower that they “do not consider are available.” In each case, the responding department can submit an invoice for the cost of responding to a call. Only the agreement with Armstrong and Spallumcheen includes a rate for such charges and a proviso that “any intent to make [a] charge...must be made clear to the party requesting mutual aid before charges are initiated”.

Except for the agreement relating to the Shuswap Area fire departments (the “Shuswap Agreement”), the agreements make each party responsible for the results of their own negligence. The Shuswap Agreement includes a provision pursuant to which the requesting department indemnifies each of the responding departments for damage or injury caused by them, even if through wilful acts or negligence.

4.2. *The Current Challenges Facing the CSRD Fire Service*

4.2.1. Changing Environment for Delivering Fire Services

One of the major challenges facing the CSRD is how to deal with the rapidly changing standards surrounding the safe and effective delivery of fire services. Fire services are one of the three main emergency services organizations, operating alongside EMS and police. Unlike the other two entities, however, the availability of fire protection remains “optional” and almost solely the responsibility of local government. Partly as a result of this situation, outside of the major metropolitan areas the vast majority of the fire services are delivered by volunteers – an unusual situation given the nature of the problems they are expected to face and potentially life-threatening consequences if mistakes are made. While this model is by no means unique to British Columbia, it has led to situations where, in the not too distant past, fire fighters around the province were

attempting to deliver services with inadequate training and inappropriate or substandard equipment – often at a risk to themselves and the taxpayers they were trying to serve.¹⁰

Over the course of the past half-dozen or so years, the CSRD has taken a series of positive steps towards improving the delivery of its fire services, including: establishing the office of the Co-ordinator, making significant investments in training and training facilities, developing region-wide operating guidelines and procedures, introducing long term budgeting and capital expenditure planning, making significant capital investments in new equipment and beginning to implement standardized record keeping and reporting requirements. Many of these initiatives have been implemented or overseen by the Co-ordinator.

The pressure for continued improvement, however, is becoming pronounced, driven by concerns over safety, effectiveness and potential liability. The increasing challenge of operating a fire service safely and effectively, while meeting the growing administrative burden involved in properly managing the service, is significantly taxing the resources and capabilities of the current structure.

When considering the recommendations contained in this report, it is important to keep in mind the changing context within which fire services must be delivered. Two important general areas of concern are the changing standards that are applicable, and the changing regulatory environment, both of which are outlined below.

Changing Standards for the Fire Service

The acceptable standards for delivering fire services, whether a career service in a major metropolitan area or a volunteer force serving a rural township or electoral area, have been rising rapidly over the last decade or more. To put the rate of change into perspective, in the 1960s the Vancouver Fire Department still had operational a fire truck that dated from the late 1920s, was using switching equipment for its dispatch that was second hand when acquired from the Hotel Vancouver in 1929, and made its members responsible for acquiring some of their own turn out gear. At present, the city is

¹⁰ The volunteer department in Clearwater was criticized for both its training levels and equipment maintenance standards in a Worksafe BC report following a line of duty death of a volunteer fire fighter in 2004. See further discussion below.

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tendering for the replacement of some of its principal fire trucks, which are barely a decade old, and is replacing its entire records management with a new system, even though the existing system was first commissioned in the early 1990s. Change since the 1960s has been dramatic and the pace of change is accelerating.

In many small communities the frequency and probability of a fire or other emergency response is relatively low. Regardless of this, when an emergency presents itself, it is expected that the fire fighters will not only be well trained and prepared to deal with the emergency, but will perform their duties safely and without risk to themselves or to others, or create liability for the jurisdiction. Appropriate training is now required by both the WorkSafe BC requirements and provincial requirements under the Fire Services Act.

The Workers' Compensation Board, WorkSafe BC Regulation Part 4 - Training, requires that all workers must be trained in safe work practices. In relation to firefighting, this is further refined by s. 31.4 of Part 31 of the Regulations: "The employer must ensure the adequate instruction and direction of fire fighters in the safe performance of their duties". The question of what level training is required was covered by a December 2002, Minister's Order made pursuant to section 3(3)(b) of the Fire Services Act, which states that "the training standards for fire service personnel in British Columbia are those published by the National Fire Protection Association".

This rising level of minimum standards creates a burden which is disproportionately felt by smaller volunteer forces, where budgets are usually limited, training opportunities fewer and the availability of the members for training, often an issue. These standards are essential for the safe execution of what is often a life threatening undertaking, and cannot be ignored. Finding the best way to accommodate these requirements, however, presents financial, operational and organizational challenges, some of which are addressed in this report.

Changing Regulatory / Liability Environment

The regulatory environment governing the safe delivery of fire services is one of the principal factors driving the changing standards and requirements. Recent legislative initiatives have increased the possibility of potential personal liability for Fire Chiefs, regional district staff and, potentially, for regional district board members, if appropriate

standards are not met. There is also the ever present potential for liability in the event that the fire suppression or other services are negligently delivered and an affected party sues for damages.

Four of the principal regulatory systems or pieces of legislation that are driving change in the delivery of fire services are considered below.

Bill C-45

Bill C-45 was an amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada, which had the effect of making it easier to find organizations criminally liable, and easier to find managers or persons in control of those organizations liable as well. The legislation has its origins in the Westray Mine disaster in Nova Scotia in 1992, where the company involved failed to act on repeated complaints of unsafe conditions emanating from government inspectors, the union and individual workers, and the resulting accident killed 26 workers. The company and its officers, however, were never successfully charged.

The amendment specifically requires individuals who are directing the work of others to take reasonable steps to ensure their safety, or face potential criminal liability if a worker or anyone else is injured. The relevant section reads as follows:

“217.1 Everyone who undertakes, or has the authority, to direct how another person does work or performs a task is under a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent bodily harm to that person, or any other person, arising from that work or task.”¹¹

Related amendments to various Criminal Code definitions mean that the class of representatives of the offending organization who can commit or contribute to the “physical element” of the offence has been expanded from directors and officers to all representatives who act on behalf of the organization, such as directors, partners, employees, members, agents or contractors of the organization.

Bill C-45 has materially increased the potential personal risk faced by fire chiefs, city managers and even Regional Board directors. If fire services are delivered in an unsafe

¹¹ *Criminal Code* (R.S., 1985, c. C-46), s. 217.1.

manner, and they are aware of the problems and failed to address them, criminal liability may result. The very existence of this bill, moreover, has become a cause for concern amongst Fire Chiefs, a situation that was amply reflected in the facilitated discussions held with the CSRD chiefs in April 2008. This new legal risk, if not perceived as being properly managed by the CSRD, potentially could adversely affect recruitment as well.

WorkSafe BC

WorkSafe BC operates a comprehensive regulatory scheme of occupational health and safety in the province. It governs and controls many aspects of fire service operations, from the general (such as standards for safe work environments, which apply to premises such as fire halls) to the specific (such as prescriptions related to fire fighter protective clothing, ladder testing, maintenance of testing records for SCBAs, staffing required for internal attack where SCBAs are being worn, etc.).

WorkSafe BC has extensive powers to order remedial works, to increase the costs of insurance coverage as a result of violations and to have individuals and organizations charged with offences for breaches of the *Workers Compensation Act* (B.C.). Penalties for a first offence can exceed \$500,000 and/or jail terms of up to six months.¹²

One of the principal defences in relation to a WorkSafe BC investigation is being able to show “due diligence”. A recent incident involving the tragic death of a volunteer fire fighter in Clearwater, B.C. (the “Clearwater Incident”), makes it apparent that WorkSafe BC’s approach to matters such as assessing the level and quality of training of the individuals involved, is very strict. While the WorkSafe BC report has not been publicly released, it is extensively quoted by the BC Coroners Service in its report on the incident.¹³ In essence, it appears that WorkSafe BC deemed the training of the fire fighters involved to be inadequate based on the poor record keeping of the fire department. Since the records were not adequately maintained, it became virtually

¹²*Workers Compensation Act* (B.C.), s. 217(a)(i). The maximum amount appears to be “inflation adjusted”: for a first offence it currently stands at a maximum of \$589,010. For second and subsequent offences, this amount rises to \$1,178,019.98 (s. 217 (b)(i)).

¹³ BC Coroners Service, “Judgement of Inquiry into the Death of Chad Jerry Schapansky”, 2 Feb. 2006 (Case No. 2004:565:0011) (the “Coroners Report”).

impossible for the department to establish to the satisfaction of WorkSafe BC (or the Coroner) that the responding fire fighters had been appropriately trained.¹⁴

WorkSafe BC has stringent requirements for documenting issues such as training, equipment maintenance and similar matters. Failure to meet those standards can result in orders, fines and, potentially, charges under the Workers Compensation Act.

Fire Services Act and Office of the Fire Commissioner

As noted above, the Minister's Order made pursuant to section 3(3)(b) of the Fire Services Act has identified the National Fire Protection Association ("NFPA") standards as the standards for training of fire personnel in the province. These standards are currently in effect and supposed to be met by all fire departments. As it is important to understand the range of these standards, they are examined in greater detail in the next section.

In the Coroner's report on the Clearwater Incident, several recommendations were made, including that the Office of the Fire Commissioner (the "Fire Commissioner") together with the employers¹⁵, "initiate and maintain a regular inspection and audit process to ensure volunteer fire departments and fire fighters meet provincially recognized standards for equipment, training and operational policy". In response to this report, the Fire Commissioner released a proposal which includes a draft of a detailed inspection and audit checklist for volunteer fire departments.¹⁶ While this proposal is still a draft, it is clear that a new layer of oversight and inspection is rapidly approaching for volunteer departments in the province. The aim of this oversight is to increase both safety and effectiveness and should be embraced as such. The downside, however, is that it also means a new layer of administrative requirement and further burden on a system which already is, in some aspects, struggling to keep up with its paperwork.

¹⁴ The Fire Chief testified that the crews involved had sufficient training to be considered "basic firefighters". The Coroner, however, appears to have preferred the views of the WorkSafe BC investigator, concluding that the "WCB investigation revealed that the Clearwater Volunteer Fire Department lacked training". The Coroners Report, pp. 6 and 7.

¹⁵ Including regional districts and municipalities, among others.

¹⁶ Office of the Fire Commissioner, *Bulletin from the Office of the Fire Commissioner: The Office of the Fire Commissioner's Response to the Coroner's Judgement of Inquiry recommendations regarding the death of Fire Fighter Chad Schapansky*, May 2008.

In addition, it should be noted that a new Fire Commissioner has recently been appointed. She appears intent on making the office more activist, which may result in a more determined attempt to establish, monitor and audit the state of the fire service in the province. This could result in further administrative pressure on smaller, local departments.

NFPA Standards

The introduction of the Minister's Order has brought about a renewed focus on the importance of the NFPA standards and how they are and should be applied within the fire service. NFPA standards are developed for use by an international audience using a consensus-based acceptance model. Each standard is reviewed on a five-year code cycle and members on the code committees are welcomed from a broad base of users and interested parties. This being the case, these standards are accepted by users and other interested parties as the "industry standard". As such, any failure in performance typically is measured against these standards regardless of whether they were formally adopted by the user.

Given the wording of the Minister's Order, the training of fire service personnel is required to be in conformance with the NFPA standards. In addition, NFPA has developed guides which form the accepted standard for many operational aspects of fire and rescue departments. For the CSRD fire service, the following is a list of the principal NFPA training and operational standards which may be applicable:

Professional Qualification Standards (Training)

- NFPA 1001 – Fire Fighter
- NFPA 1002 – Driver/operator
- NFPA 1006 to NFPA 1670 – certification standards for technical rescue – vehicle extrication, rope rescue (several levels), confined space rescue, trench, machinery etc.
- NFPA 1021 – Fire Officer
- NFPA 1031 – Fire Inspector
- NFPA 1035 – Public Fire and Life Safety Education
- NFPA 1041 – Fire Service Instructor
- NFPA 472 – Competence of Hazardous Material Responders.

Guides and Operational Standards

- NFPA 1201 – Emergency Services to the Public
- NFPA 1221 – Emergency Communications
- NFPA 1401 – Fire Service Reports and Records
- NFPA 1403 – Conducting Live Fire Training Evolutions
- NFPA 1500 – OHS (referred to where WorkSafe is silent)
- NFPA 1521 – Incident Safety Officer
- NFPA 1561 – Incident Management System
- NFPA 1720 – Deployment Standard for Volunteer departments.

The above list should not be treated as exhaustive. Many of the agencies which regulate fire services in the province (such as WorkSafe BC and the Fire Commissioner), will measure a fire department's performance (or failure) against the standards noted above.

4.2.2. Population Growth and Development

One of the other challenges facing the CSRD is population growth and development. Since the 2001 Census, the CSRD has experienced a reasonable amount of growth in its permanent population. Estimates by BCStats suggest that the permanent population in the CSRD grew by at least 6% between 2001 and 2007.¹⁷ The growth in the number of permanent residents, however, is only part of the story. Anecdotal evidence from the facilitated discussions with both the FSC members and Fire Chiefs, as well as interviews with CSRD Development Services staff, support the view that there has been a significant rise in the number of major real estate developments – already started or planned – in a number of the Fire Suppression Areas.

Many areas in the CSRD are popular resort and tourist destinations, and a significant portion of the new development is intended for this transient population – a situation that will likely continue in the foreseeable future. The summertime visitors put significant stresses on the fire departments, but do not contribute directly to their staffing resources.

¹⁷ BCStats, "Columbia Shuswap Regional District: Community Facts", accessed at <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/dd/facsheet/CF100.pdf>. See also footnote 1 above.

To put the problem into perspective, during the 2003 Firestorm, when there was a potential threat to the North Shuswap area, the Provincial Emergency Program (“PEP”) initially proposed developing an evacuation plan based on the need to move several thousand residents. This proposal was predicated on PEP’s understanding of the permanent population of the affected region. The local Fire Chiefs quickly pointed out that the summer population that potentially needed to be moved was more likely to be 30,000 people than the 3,000 – 4,000 that PEP was anticipating.¹⁸

Discussions with the Fire Chiefs noted a number of challenges in this regard, which can be expected to increase and require on-going management in the future:

- Enormous summertime population fluctuations which can significantly stress regular resources. Some of the impacts noted by the Fire Chiefs included: bonfires, campfires, fireworks, alcohol consumption, and increased call volumes from visitors using cell phones, who often do not know where they are calling from. As more resort development occurs, the imbalance between transient and permanent population can be expected to continue (and possibly increase);¹⁹
- Construction of major developments without direct, regular input from local fire departments;
- Infrastructure problems (including road and bridge congestion and water supply issues); and
- Significant access/egress challenges for some of the most popular tourist destinations (particularly the North Shuswap, where single lane, wooden bridges offer the only access in a number of areas).

4.2.3. Challenges of Operating Volunteer Organizations

The backbone of the CSRD fire service is comprised of a dedicated core of volunteers, who give regularly of their time, skills and effort to provide a life-critical emergency

¹⁸ Comments arising from the facilitated session with the CSRD Fire Chiefs, April 2008.

¹⁹ BCStats reported that tourism room revenues in the CSRD climbed more than 50% in the period from 2003 – 2007. Even allowing for price increases, this suggests that the number of visitors to the CSRD (including, of course, the four major municipalities), has increased materially during the last five years. Source: BCStats, “Columbia Shuswap Regional District: Quarterly Regional Statistics, First Quarter 2008”, accessed at: <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/pubs/qrs/rd39.pdf> .

service. The volunteer fire fighters, their chiefs and officers, and the members of the FSCs, all provide incredible service to their local communities – service which, if it had to be paid for on an entirely “career” basis, would render the operation of a fire service of the current size and capability economically unviable. The residents of the CSRD owe a significant debt of ongoing gratitude to the volunteers who make their fire service possible.

The identification of the challenges the fire departments are now facing, as the delivery of fire services becomes increasingly complex and administratively burdensome, should not be taken as a criticism of the efforts or dedication of the volunteers. Rather, it is intended to highlight that the changes which have occurred or can be foreseen, make it increasingly inappropriate to burden volunteers with the growing administrative and regulatory requirements and inappropriate to expose these individuals (and potentially the CSRD) to liability in the event of a mistake.

For the CSRD, the challenges of operating the existing volunteer fire service structure is best exemplified in the challenges faced with recruitment and retention of fire fighters and the role played by the FSCs.

Recruitment and Retention of Fire Fighters

Most volunteer organizations, whatever their mandate, experience significant recruitment challenges. The volunteer fire services are no exception. Based on the benchmarking conducted with other regional districts, and the work the Consultants have carried out in other fire service reviews, it is clear that the challenge of recruiting volunteer fire fighters is growing. A number of factors – ranging from changing demographics, to changing employment environments, an increasingly mobile and transient population and greater demands on individual’s time from other sources – are usually cited to explain the situation. Unlike other volunteer positions, moreover, the stresses on volunteer fire fighters are much greater: the time demands – effectively, 24/7, and in many cases, with rising call volumes – are much greater, the technical requirements are much more onerous, participation is often at the direct expense of lost time at work (and possibly lost wages) and the potential personal risks are much higher.

The facilitated discussions with the Fire Chiefs emphasized the extent of the challenge faced by many of the fire departments in maintaining their rosters.²⁰ The departments which are attempting to draw recruits from smaller permanent resident populations obviously face the greatest challenge, although it is fair to say that none are finding the process easy.

Within the CSRD, the recruitment challenge is increased by the changing demographics of the region. While the full time population is growing, the median age is significantly higher than 20 years ago, as more and more permanent residents are moving to the area for retirement. Between 1986 and 2006, the median age has increased by 12 years (compared to a provincial average of 7),²¹ meaning that much of the growth in the permanent population does not necessarily produce a corresponding increase in the pool of potential volunteer fire fighters. Job types also appear to be changing, as there are fewer employed in primary industries (where many volunteer fire fighters were drawn from in the past) and more in the service industries.²²

The issue, of course, is more than just one of recruitment. The problem of retention also is critical, given that it can take one or two years to train volunteers to a point where they can, for example, be involved in an interior attack. Thus, turnover in personnel can significantly degrade the level of response that can be safely and effectively delivered by a volunteer department, while increasing the training costs associated with operating the service.

Two other issues that were of specific concern to the Chiefs, and which may impact future recruitment to their positions, were the growing administrative burden and increasing potential for personal liability. These concerns can be expected to become even more significant as the regulation of the fire services becomes increasingly demanding.

²⁰ See Appendix C and section V(3) below.

²¹ BCStats, "Columbia Shuswap Regional District: Quarterly Regional Statistics, First Quarter 2008", accessed at: <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/pubs/qrs/rd39.pdf> on 17 July 2008.

²² *Ibid.* This appears to be the implication of the BC Stats quarterly report for 2008, which projects a decline of jobs in the traditional primary industries (forestry and mining).

Fire Suppression Committees

The FSCs are responsible for handling the fundamental administrative aspects of their respective fire department's operations and are advisory to the CSRD Board. This role includes, among other things, developing annual five year financial plans, reviewing and authorizing purchase orders, handling petty cash, building and equipment maintenance, and providing an effective "interface" between the fire service and the public it serves. A number of the FSC members saw the financial oversight role as a critical part of their obligation to represent the taxpayers of their regions. In the current model, the theoretical role played by the FSCs is critical to operation of the fire service, and involves managing a number of areas of significant potential liability.

In the facilitations with both the FSCs and the Fire Chiefs, however, it became clear that, for the vast majority of Fire Suppression Areas, attracting sufficient volunteers to staff the FSCs is posing an enormous challenge. In at least one case, the FSC is entirely staffed by members of the fire department, which creates a potential conflict of interest and undermines the intent of the committee, which is to provide a community voice in the direction and operation of the local fire service. The results of the facilitation with representatives of the FSCs are dealt with in greater detail in a following section.

The turnout for most annual general meetings of the FSCs is best described as sparse and a number of FSC members who participated in the facilitation noted that it often took committee members at least a year or two really to grasp the role that they were supposed to be playing. That being said, few of the committee members participating in the facilitation seemed aware that their mandate included building and apparatus maintenance and upkeep (much of which was actually done by the volunteer firefighters) and that they were responsible for ensuring that WorkSafe BC occupational health and safety requirements were being met for the premises. Documentation from some of the FSCs is quite good; for others, however, it is notably lacking. While meetings may be taking place (Bylaw 5285 requires the committees meet at least quarterly), proper records of them are not always being maintained. At times, communications between the FSCs and the CSRD do not operate as well as they should resulting, for example, in bills going unpaid for several months, leading in turn to interest or penalty charges having to be paid.

The growing administrative complexity of managing a modern fire service makes relying upon volunteers for fundamental administrative tasks a potentially risky proposition for all concerned.

4.2.4. Financial Disparities and Limitations

The current structure of the Fire Suppression Areas means that there are enormous disparities in the size of the underlying tax bases. Based on converted assessment values, the smallest tax base is barely 7% of the largest, and only about 27% of the size of the “average” for the 13 Fire Suppression Areas.²³ Despite this extreme variation in tax base, the cost of operating a department is generally comparable across the region. Obviously operational costs vary based on the number of halls, range of equipment, timing of capital expenditures and number of members, but the basic cost of a single hall with an average size complement of fire fighters and two or three major pieces of apparatus is generally in excess of \$100,000 per year to operate²⁴ The “average” cost of operating the service across the entire region during the 2006 – 2008 period, has been in excess of \$136,000 per department per year and is projected to rise to some \$184,000 per department over the next 4 years.²⁵

The impact of this “basic cost”²⁶ for Fire Suppression Areas with smaller tax bases is quite significant. It creates “have” and “have not” departments, and makes it extremely difficult for some departments to update their equipment, to cover all of their other costs and to deliver their services safely and effectively. As noted by one of the Fire Chiefs during the April facilitation, it is unacceptable to have a situation where fire crews are

²³ The smallest tax base is White Lake, the converted assessment value of which was \$8,997,098 in 2008. The largest tax base was Sorrento/Blind Bay (Shuswap) with a converted assessment value of \$125,200,052. The “average” converted assessment value across the thirteen Fire Suppression Areas was \$32,171,572. See Appendix K for details.

²⁴ The principal exception to this is Malakwa, which over the past few years, cost less than \$100,000/year to run, except when upgrading its apparatus. Based on its five year budget, however, Malakwa’s overall costs are expected to rise to more than \$100,000/year by 2011. Source: CSRD Fire Services 5 year budgets, current as of 19 March 2008.

²⁵ See Appendix K. Projected figures are based on the 5 year budget. See note 1 above. Fire Department budgets are very “lumpy”: in years where a major piece of apparatus is purchased, or perhaps significant investments are being made in new SCBAs or radios, the budget will often be more than double that of an ordinary year, making comparisons challenging.

²⁶ It should also be remembered that each fire department must meet certain irreducible minimum standards if it is to be recognized by the insurance industry. WorkSafe BC regulations and the Minister’s Order under the Fire Service Act also have the effect of establishing various minimum requirements in connection with delivering fire services – requirements which cost approximately the same to meet regardless of whether there is a large or small tax base.

asked to operate with substandard equipment because of the financial disparities that exist. His view was widely applauded at the meeting.

It also needs to be emphasized that a department which is operating below the minimum standards, potentially puts other fire departments (and their taxpayers) at risk, in at least three ways. First, in a mutual aid call out, the “substandard” department either may not be able to respond, or may respond improperly, increasing the chance of damage to property or danger to life. Second, a “substandard” department may be forced to call out mutual aid more often, because of its inability to handle emergencies in its own jurisdiction. Finally, if a “substandard” department makes a mistake, the effects of any resulting incident or liability could be felt across the region. As such, ensuring that all departments are functioning properly is actually a responsibility shared across the Fire Suppression Areas.

It should be stressed that we have not conducted an operational review, and are not suggesting that any departments within the CSRD are “substandard”. Concerns were raised at the facilitated meetings with the Chiefs and Officers about challenges with updating and replacing equipment, and the strains placed on their budgets by the costs involved. Many of these strains arise as a result of tax bases which are simply too small.

4.2.5. Potential Changes to the Mandate of the Fire Services

The range of services offered, and increasingly expected, of fire departments has increased significantly over the past couple of decades. In addition to their traditional roles in fire suppression, fire prevention, education and inspection, a host of “specialty” services are now offered by many departments. These services include highway rescue and extrication, first medical responder (“FMR”), high angle rescue, water rescue, fireboats and HazMat capabilities. For the CSRD, there is the additional problem of a growing risk of significant interface fires. A combination of increasing development and the effects of mountain pine beetle mean that the risk of a major interface fire is one that will increasingly have to be considered in fire department planning.

Under the current structure, CSRD departments are restricted to fire suppression services. This focus is appropriate in the current environment, given the challenges of

ensuring that the departments' fundamental role is being properly met and the potentially far-ranging implications of adding additional services to their mandate.²⁷ Even adding a fire prevention/education function would represent a significant addition of responsibilities and require the dedication of further resources and training.²⁸

That being said, the likelihood of having to expand the role of the fire services in the future, in response to community need or demand, has to be recognized. Any revised structure, therefore, should be flexible enough to permit this to occur, with appropriate authorization and planning. With new roles, however, will come new challenges in staffing, funding, workload, training (including appropriate certification), equipment and management. New services will further add to the fire departments' administrative requirements and potential for liability.

5. Consultation Process

The consultation process involved a series of meetings with various interested or affected parties: Works Services Staff, representatives of the FSCs, the Fire Chiefs and their deputies, CSR Development Services staff, CSR Finance staff and the CSR Board of Directors. Meetings with the larger groups were formally facilitated by the Consultants on the basis of previously circulated agendas. Throughout the process, the staff from Works Services effectively acted as the steering committee and principal information resource. Their approach was professional and helpful throughout, and it is clear that they are committed to ensuring that the CSR fire services are safe, efficient and effective.

5.1. Meeting with Works Services Staff

The project began with an initial meeting on 1 February 2008 with staff from the CSR Works Services, including Doug Dymond, Manager, Works Services; Gary Holte, Deputy Manager, Works Services; Jack Blair, Fire Services Co-ordinator; and Carolyn Black, Works Services Assistant. Prior to the meeting, the Consultants provided a list of

²⁷ Based on anecdotal evidence from a number of other regions, the impact of taking on FMR and highway rescue can adversely impact volunteer departments by materially increasing call volumes and significantly changing the nature of the role being performed. It also adds significant training and equipment costs.

²⁸ See the Fire Prevention and Education Section below.

requested documents and background information (including, for example, copies of the relevant bylaws, agreements, financial information, boundary maps, etc.). In addition, a series of questions and issues were submitted in advance to facilitate the discussion.

The purpose of this meeting was to clarify the intent of the project and to be introduced to various aspects of the fire service structure, governance and the changes that have taken place since many of the systems and services were initially put into place. At this meeting, it was indicated that the long term goals of the CSRD were to deal with the following issues:

- To achieve commonality of service and effectiveness, notwithstanding the somewhat haphazard manner in which the fire service had evolved over time, which had resulted in widely varying tax rates and service “polygons”;
- Explore opportunities for creating efficiencies;
- Reduce the administrative burden on the FSCs and the Fire Chiefs;
- Streamline the operations, and improve risk management, reporting and oversight;
- Explore opportunities to create a regional record management system; and
- Ensure the fire service continues to provide good value to taxpayers.

5.2. *Meeting with Fire Suppression Committees*

This set the stage for a facilitated meeting with representatives of the FSCs from each of the 13 Fire Suppression Areas. Prior to the meeting, a formal list of discussion questions was developed by the Consultants. A draft of this agenda was provided to the Works Services staff for comment, and the revised version of it was circulated to all of the FSCs. The meeting took place on 5 April 2008 at the Shuswap Regional Fire Training Centre and was attended by representatives from 12 of the 13 Fire Suppression Areas. Nicholson did not have a representative present for this meeting but did send a detailed and helpful written response that was considered during discussion of each subject throughout the meeting.

The meeting focused on identifying the matters which the FSCs were handling well, the areas where the greatest challenges lay and their views of how the fire service could be improved. Throughout the discussions, the participants demonstrated their commitment

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to the fire departments and taxpayers that they served, and a concern for ensuring that the fire service operated as effectively and efficiently as possible. Significant credit must be accorded to these individuals for the work that the FSCs have done and continue to do in the interest of supporting fire services within each fire protection area. The notes of the meeting are attached as Appendix B.

It was widely agreed that the FSCs were important in ensuring that there was a connection between the local fire departments and the communities they served. The connection operated in several ways, including “public relations” activities, some fund raising and support work and, perhaps most importantly, input on budget matters. A number of representatives noted that they were able to give voice to concerns over tax rates and, in essence, help ensure value for money from their departments. Our discussions with CSRD Finance staff confirmed the view that this public input on the budgetary process was helpful and important. The FSC representatives generally expressed their appreciation of the role played by the Co-ordinator and the assistance provided by him and other CSRD staff in, for example, developing and managing their annual and long term budgets and dealing with particular administrative issues or questions.

The primary challenges identified for the FSCs related to the size and number of the committees, ensuring compliance with the existing bylaws, and the difficulty in getting sufficient community interest to fill all of the positions. In some cases, in order to meet the minimum committee size, the ranks of the FSCs were filled out by volunteer fire fighters. In at least one case, the FSC is entirely staffed by the fire fighters, as there is no community interest in fulfilling the role. Concerns were expressed about the potential conflict of interest – actual or perceived – that this situation created. These concerns highlighted the fact that the level of community volunteerism is changing and that functions which were adequately staffed by volunteers in past are struggling with fewer members, less available time, and a higher level of required expertise. Some FSC representatives also noted that overt politicisation occasionally occurred, which could sour relations between committee members and, potentially, between the FSC and its department and/or the CSRD.

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As there was some uncertainty amongst some representatives as to the extent of the FSCs' mandate, Bylaw 5285 was reviewed in some detail. It also was noted that the FSCs' responsibilities for building and equipment maintenance (most of which appears to be performed by the volunteer fire fighters themselves), makes them responsible under the WCB occupational health and safety regime. The discussion indicated that the requirements under Bylaw 5285 were not uniformly understood and administered. Indeed, some representatives noted that the division of responsibility between the FSCs for "administrative" issues, and the fire departments for "operational" issues was occasionally difficult to work out.

Some of the FSC representatives expressed concerns over "cash handling/purchasing" issues. Some of the problems had arisen because of miscommunication (or delayed communication) with the CSRD on bill payments. Other problems had cropped up where purchases were being made by departments without FSC authorization and evidenced a lack of clarity about the respective roles and rights of the FSCs and the fire departments.

Over the course of the meeting there was significant discussion of how the committee structure initially had been created, the challenges that exist in managing it and the growing liabilities that committee members potentially faced as the regulatory requirements became more onerous. The challenges of turnover in members, and bringing new FSC members up to speed on their duties and obligations, were also a concern. This issue generated some discussion around the difficulty faced by the CSRD of ensuring that all committee members were properly informed of their duties and trained in their roles and functions.

There was a reasonable amount of concern about the growing potential for personal liability if an accident occurred in connection with activity that had been assigned through bylaw to the FSC. This led to a general discussion of the implications of both Bill C-45 and Work Safe BC requirements. The general consensus was that greater centralized administrative support from the Regional District would help deal with both the growing paperwork burden and the liability that potentially flows from not maintaining records accurately. It was also noted that growing concerns over possible liability was becoming a potential impediment to recruitment and retention of FSC members.

The role of citizen representation involving the fire service was an area explored in the benchmarking exercise. Of the five jurisdictions surveyed, three effectively had no direct mechanism for taxpayer input. One had a system similar to the current FSC structure used by the CSRD, while the other had a general Local Services Advisory Committee, which covered all services offered, including fire.

5.3. *Meeting with the CSRD Fire Chiefs and Deputies*

On 12 April 2008, a facilitated meeting was held with Fire Chiefs and officers representing each of the fire departments throughout the region. As with the FSC meeting, a list of issues, reflecting input from Work Services staff, was circulated in advance to focus the discussion. The participants demonstrated insight, professionalism and a shared concern about the safe delivery of fire services. They clearly understood the extent to which fire services are changing in the province, and wanted to ensure that their departments reflect best practices. Views were expressed frankly but respectfully throughout the session. A copy of the notes from this meeting appears in this report as Appendix C.

Over the course of this meeting, the primary focus was on identifying the major challenges faced by the departments. At the same time, there was an overall review of the role currently played by the CSRD in assisting and managing the fire service. Great appreciation was expressed for the role played by the Co-ordinator, whom they felt had been a significant and important addition by the CSRD.

Various issues or concerns raised by the Chiefs and officers are covered in relevant areas of this report; those issues are generally not repeated here. As part of the process, the group was asked to identify the top areas of importance to them, and from those, select the ones of greatest concern. From a list of 16 important issues, the four top priorities that emerged were:

- Recruitment and retention issues for volunteer fire fighters, including the following: aging population, general difficulties in attracting and retaining members; younger potential members no longer live in the community; time

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required to train members to a functional level; and seasonal residents not interested in serving as volunteers;

- Potential liability issues;
- Training needs/response readiness for emerging hazards; and
- Workload caused by administrative demands.

There were a number of other areas of significant concern. Most of the Chiefs felt that communications between fire departments and Planning Services needed to be improved and formalized. In their view, developments were being built without adequate input from the fire services, creating situations where issues of access, water, and building height and proximity, posed significant challenges for local departments. The idea of this communication being directed through the Co-ordinator was well received. The issues surrounding new developments were made worse by the lack of permitting and Building Code enforcement, and the absence of any fire inspection system. The group saw a need for the region to exercise better and more formal control over these areas.

In the discussion of the impact of large seasonal populations, the problem of fire works was echoed consistently throughout the room. These risks are dealt with in the Fire Education section below, but it should be noted that the Chiefs and officers felt that more effective control of fireworks was required at the regional level.

Some of the participants were concerned that the rising costs of operations were difficult for their Fire Suppression Areas to manage. As a result, renewing equipment and meeting all of the rising standards, was becoming a significant financial challenge for their tax base.

A number of participants saw the need for the fire service's mandate to be expanded to include road rescue. Although a consideration of this issue was beyond the scope of work, the potential need to review the mandate in the future informed the recommendations that were made.

5.4. Meeting with the CSRD Board

The consultants met with members of the CSRD Regional Board on 14 May 2008. The purpose of this meeting was to review the themes that had emerged from previous meetings and to seek input from the Directors into the direction that they would like to see their fire departments develop.

Following a presentation outlining the project scope and a summary of the stakeholder meetings, the high level issues identified to date were reviewed and discussed. The Directors also provided comment with regard to a series of questions that had been circulated in advance, which provided additional guidance with respect to the Regional District's position on a range of issues. A copy of the notes taken during this meeting is found in Appendix D of this report.

5.5. Input from CSRD Finance Staff

On 11 April 2008, a meeting was held with the CSRD Chief Financial Officer, Ted Holmes, and Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Peter Jarman. The purpose of the meeting was to determine their involvement with and views of matters involving the fire service. Notes of this discussion are attached as Appendix E.

The primary interaction between the Financial Services staff and the fire services, was in the development of annual and five year budgets and capital plans. Peter Jarman had helped the FSCs by developing a model spreadsheet that could be used for budget development, and Financial Services offered their services and assistance on an "as requested" basis. He also attended a number of the FSC meetings, particularly around the Shuswap area. He noted that the input of the FSCs on budgeting – in particular in relation to community sentiment about any tax changes – was highly valued.

Both staff members pointed out that significant changes had taken place that placed additional accountability on staff and these accountabilities were then passed on to the FSCs and fire departments. Concerns were expressed about the difficulty of overseeing the role played by the FSCs and about the rising technical requirements of the administrative functions that they are charged with handling. Both felt that the fire services would benefit from a more centralised administrative function, and that the

FSCs should be refocused on issues related to developing and improving the connection between the fire services and the local communities. Based on the positive experience with the Shuswap Emergency Social Services team, they felt recruitment to the FSC would be easier if the administrative responsibilities (and potential liabilities attached to them) were uploaded to the CSRD. From a risk management perspective, they also felt that this approach was preferable.

They also expressed some concern that the capacity of volunteer committee members properly to manage the financial systems, including spending authorities, use and limitations of petty cash, authorizations, prompt payment of invoices and related matters, was at times limited. They felt the challenges faced by the FSCs highlighted the need for centralized and consistent support for volunteer fire fighters at the regional level. To relieve some portion of the administrative burden and ensure proper oversight, they also felt there was a need to introduce a centralized records management system that is understood by all users and includes incident recording, training and minutes from meetings.

It was further learned during this discussion that Ted Holmes is also responsible for the Emergency Planning function of the CSRD. Although not within the scope of work for this project, at some point in future the CSRD may wish to investigate the value of improving the integration of the fire services with the CSRD Emergency Plan, including cross-training with Shuswap Emergency Social Services and the search and rescue groups that are named within the plan.

5.6. *Input from Development Services Department*

As the issue of growth and development throughout the region was highlighted during the facilitated meetings, a series of questions were compiled based on the concerns that emerged and were forwarded to staff at Development Services for their input.

These questions covered a variety of areas, but focused on the state of planning and land use bylaws, the level of inspection and permitting carried out by the CSRD, the anticipated location and volume of new development and the extent to which fire departments were consulted about or informed of major new developments.

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As with other functions of the CSRD, it became apparent that growth and development was driving significant changes in the manner that development applications were being handled and approved. A copy of the complete response from Development Services is attached as Appendix F. The major points are as follows:

- A major effort is currently underway to develop Official Community Plans (“OCPs”) throughout the CSRD and zoning and land-use bylaws are being written for many areas that were previously unregulated;
- A subdivision servicing bylaw is currently in place and applies to the entire CSRD. This is being rewritten and is slated for completion by summer 2009.
- Development may occur in hazardous (interface) areas noted in the South Shuswap OCP and development will be allowed within the capacities of the fire suppression services and with their agreement;
- The new OCPs will require assessments of wildfire interface risks and contain provisions for building safety features and controlled landscaping;
- At present, fire services are only included in discussions on an ad hoc basis, but Development Services are open to formalizing this level of communication. Input received through the Coordinator has proven to be of value and there is an interest in seeing this relationship formalized in matters related to new developments and variances;
- Communication of issues related to water supply and hydrant systems is the responsibility of Works Department staff;
- Mapping can be made available to the fire departments that will indicate new property addresses as they are developed (an issue that could be covered under any formalized communications structure that is set up);
- The development trend is towards duplexes, four-plexes, townhouses and other cluster-type housing, which is expected to continue for the foreseeable future;
- Large increases in seasonal population growth can be expected to continue; and
- Large developments are expected in a number of areas, including Malakwa (Area E) and Canoe Creek (Area D).

6. Benchmarking

To determine how the CSRD's fire services compare with those in other regions, a benchmarking exercise was undertaken using the following five regional districts in British Columbia that provide fire protection as one of their local services:

- Cariboo Regional District;
- Central Kootenay Regional District;
- Cowichan Valley Regional District;
- Regional District of Kootenay Boundary; and
- Regional District of Fraser-Fort George.

A snapshot of the input that was collected is located in Appendix G to this report. The input is used throughout the report when examining specific issues or concerns related to the delivery of fire services in the CSRD, to assess how other regions are dealing with the same challenges. Conclusions related to best or recommended practice are drawn subjectively based on the data provided.

From the benchmarking exercise, it was clear that the challenges being experienced in the CSRD are shared in other regional districts. The CSRD's recent approach, which has involved a certain amount of centralization and standardization, combined with investments in equipment and training, generally compares well with its peers.

The review shows that the cost of the service in the other regions was very much comparable in range to the CSRD's, going from a low of \$0.26/\$1,000 of assessed value to a high of \$1.93/\$1,000. For at least three regional districts, however, the average cost across the region was at least \$1.00/\$1,000, which is materially higher than in the CSRD.

Of the five regions, four use a decentralized service model similar to the CSRD, while one operates a regional fire department. Each of the decentralized models has established a position similar to that of the Co-ordinator. In some cases, the lack of clear authority and reporting lines for the centralized position significantly impedes any efforts to generate regional efficiencies and creates a source of on-going frustration and tension for those involved.

Comparison with Red Deer County, Alberta

In addition to the benchmarking against other regional districts, a review was undertaken of the administrative structure and fire services provided by Red Deer County, Alberta. The Red Deer County system involves a multi-disciplinary approach to public safety that includes fire protection, law enforcement (aside from the RCMP), and administration of a contracted emergency medical service (EMS). It is a useful as a benchmark, because it provides a good example of how a centralized regional system can operate.

The role and authority of the fire services is specified by an establishing bylaw dated 19 July 2005. Under the Red Deer structure, the Fire Services Manager (“FSM”) reports to the Director of Parks and Protective Services. The FSM is responsible for 10 fire stations owned by the county and five “fire cooperatives” that would typically be referred to as subscription fire departments²⁹. There also are several contracts for mutual aid with municipalities within the County, including the city of Red Deer. The County effectively has centralized purchasing through the FSM, who negotiates contracts for purchases of consumables and replacement of equipment as required. The FSM is also responsible for developing suitable specifications for new fire apparatus and replacing equipment in accordance with capital planning.

Fire Protection is funded through a “fire tax levy” of \$0.50/\$1,000 of assessed value throughout the County. This level of taxation reportedly resulted in more than sufficient funding for services provided as well as for the replacement of fire apparatus and equipment as required. However, the fire tax levy is used to fund only fire protection services (including suppression, education, inspection and fire dispatch) but is not used to fund various “specialty” services such as vehicle extrication, search and rescue, etc.

The training of fire service personnel is administered by Red Deer County Fire Services, which provides for training of fire fighters up to NFPA Fire Fighter Level 2. All fire fighters are required to be fully trained in live fire that takes place at a training facility in Red Deer or at FireEtc, a division of Lakeland College located at Vermillion, Alberta .

²⁹ A subscription department is one that is paid for by “direct subscription” or other financial support outside of the normal taxation process.

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Although the prerequisite for becoming a fire chief is completion of Fire Officer Level 2, this is a locally developed standard and is not directly comparable to the Fire Officer 2 of NFPA 1021, Professional Qualification Standard for Fire Officer. It should also be noted that, although there are waiting lists to become a fire fighter in most departments throughout the county, very few candidates step forward to become a fire chief.

Most of the Red Deer departments do not pay their volunteers, although those fire stations that have opted for reimbursement have negotiated that fire fighters will receive approximately \$14-16 per hour, while a fire chief can receive up to \$22.00 per hour, based on a series of criteria that includes length of service, training completed, and administrative skills. In addition, those who have opted to be reimbursed can qualify for a performance bonus based on the number of training sessions attended and emergency responses. Increases to reimbursements are based on negotiated settlements received by other staff within the Red Deer County system and include a cost of living adjustment.

Building inspections and plan approval are a provincial service. This is a requirement under the Alberta Safety Codes Council that requires Building Inspectors throughout the Counties to be licensed by the Province of Alberta to perform these services (it is noteworthy that many of the functions that impact fire safety, including building code enforcement and fire prevention are legislated by the Province of Alberta). Although contractors and developers may approach the fire department for input into the fire-related needs of a project, any advice provided is strictly ad hoc and is not considered official input to the outcome of the project.

Fire inspections are provided bi-annually to public buildings. Fire inspections can only be performed by inspectors who have current fire inspector credentials meeting the provincial standard as specified by the Safety Codes Council. Public education is provided on an ad hoc basis, although Fire Smart is promoted at the County level as a requirement where development takes place in forested or interface areas.

There is a strong mutual aid system operating throughout the County that includes response into the City of Red Deer (a career department) if required. This system was designed to provide service where and when it was required, limited only by the

resources that are available. This system reportedly eliminates misunderstandings and limits the possibility of inter-service rivalry.

7. Current Reporting Structure for Fire Suppression

No formal organizational chart appears to exist for the regional fire service. Attached at Appendix L is a chart developed by the Consultants which reflects our understanding of the current legal and actual reporting structure and responsibilities.

The CSRD is the legal owner of all of the assets of the fire services. At law, it is also ultimately responsible for the operation of the fire departments and responsible for the safety of its fire fighters and officers and all related operations, equipment and premises.

Within the CSRD, fire services are a function of the Work Services Department. The Co-ordinator reports directly to the Manager, Work Services. The Coordinator's legal authority over the individual Fire Chiefs or FSCs, whose duties are specified by bylaw, is not entirely clear. In practice, however, in accordance with the terms of his appointment, the Coordinator has undertaken a significant series of efforts to standardize and improve the administration and delivery of fire services across the region. These efforts have been generally well received by both the Fire Chiefs and the FSCs, and in practice, they appear to generally defer to and accept his decisions. There is, however, some overlap and potential confusion as to responsibilities and roles between the Co-ordinator, the Fire Chiefs and FSCs, including such matters as responsibility for workplace safety inspections and maintenance of the fire halls and fire apparatus.

The FSCs are deemed to be a committee of the CSRD Board. To the extent that a reporting relationship is defined in Bylaw 5285, the FSCs generally appear to report to the Board or, in the case of major expenditures, also to CSRD staff. The FSCs have "administrative power with respect to the management and operation of the fire department", but they are specifically precluded from involving themselves in operational issues. An FSC may make recommendations on the appointment or removal of a fire chief or deputy to the Board and is responsible for submitting annual budgets for Board approval. The FSCs manage "petty cash" directly, and must authorize expenditures that exceed the petty cash amounts (which expenditures, in turn, must be approved by the Board, or an "Officer of the Board"). In practice, these expenditures typically are

reviewed by Works Services staff and ultimately handled by Finance staff. Works Services staff (including the Coordinator) also provides the bulk of the actual day-to-day contact for the FSCs with the regional district.

8. Recommendations for Structural Changes

The consultation process and review have revealed that the organizational structure of the fire services needs to be revisited. The delivery of fire services is becoming more demanding, with rising call volumes and a widening array of service requests coupled with a growing focus on administration and documented processes. Failure to meet these obligations can give rise both to personal liability for individuals who are in charge and corporate liability for the CSRD, which is ultimately responsible for the service. Coupled with these changing requirements, is that the local fire service model has become progressively more unwieldy as it expanded from one to thirteen separate departments over the past 30 years. Proper control and oversight of all of the elements in the system is becoming increasingly difficult, at the very time that the obligation to implement proper controls is escalating. At the same time, the rising standards and requirements for training and equipment are highlighting the financial disparities that exist in the current system.

Even when there is a recognized need for change, however, care must be taken to ensure that the recommendations do not inadvertently or negatively affect the principal mission and core values of the organization. From the review of the CSRD fire services, it was determined that core values include:

- taxpayers' money spent in the best interest of firefighter and community safety;
- taxpayer oversight or input into the fire services remains important;
- fire departments will provide the services that are needed to keep citizens safe and to preserve life and property;
- fire departments will maintain operational readiness in order to respond in a timely manner;
- firefighters who respond to an emergency are professional, well trained, appropriately supervised and properly equipped;

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- a strong association exists between the firefighters and the local fire departments with the areas and citizens that they serve; and
- service improvements or additions will be made to meet changing needs and interests, including those arising from development and population growth, demographic changes, or taxpayer demand.

The current structure is most challenged by its decentralized nature and reliance on volunteers to perform fundamental administrative tasks. There is a need to simplify the system, upload certain administrative obligations, improve oversight and control and establish a financial base which will enable the services to be delivered properly, but without undue financial burden on any group of taxpayers. At the same time, the benefits of local fire departments' identities and connections with their communities, and taxpayer input into the fire services, needs to be preserved to the extent possible.

With that framework in mind, we make the following recommendations:

1. Enhance the office and role of the Fire Suppression Co-ordinator.
2. Revise the structure and role of the Fire Suppression Committees.
3. Update the Operational Criteria Bylaw (BL 5286) for volunteer fire departments.
4. Identify specific, fundamental administrative tasks currently handled by volunteers in the Fire Department and either:
 - a. Upload the task to the CSRD; or
 - b. Provide systems or assistance that will reduce the burden on fire departments and facilitate CSRD oversight and review.
5. Merge the Fire Suppression Areas into a single service area with a single budget.

Each of these recommendations is discussed in detail below, including, where appropriate, considerations of some of the financial/taxation implications, legislative issues, change management concerns and related implementation issues. A revised organizational chart is attached as Appendix L. Before these recommendations are implemented, however, we believe that further consultation is required with the affected groups. Although there have been facilitated meetings with the FSCs and Fire Chiefs, the recommendations will require further input by them. Their efforts on the part of the community earn them the right to be actively involved in evolving the system.

8.1.1. Recommendation 1

Enhance the Role and Office of the Fire Services Co-ordinator.

The Co-ordinator has already initiated a process of regional oversight, standardization and a certain amount of centralization of functions. There currently exists some overlap and lack of clarity about the relationship between the Co-ordinator, the fire departments and the FSCs. The role of the Co-ordinator should be enhanced and clarified, and the office strengthened in the following ways:

1. The role as defined in the “Position Description – Fire Services Co-ordinator”³⁰ should be included in a re-drafted “Fire Department Operational Criteria” bylaw and the Co-ordinator should have the right to set and enforce common standards on matters under his purview (including, for example, training, equipment, proficiency criteria and operational guidelines).
2. The Co-ordinator’s role should be an exempt position and his title should be updated to reflect the changes in his role.
3. The Co-ordinator’s office should be made responsible for overseeing the proper administration of the Fire Departments and ensuring compliance with applicable laws and regulations (including CSRD Occupational Health & Safety, WorkSafe B.C., Fire Services Act and the Office of the Fire Commissioner).
4. The Co-ordinator’s office should be expanded to include an administrative assistant, to help in the regulatory oversight role and assist Fire Departments with records keeping and related administrative obligations, including developing annual budgets for each department. The position could initially be filled on a part-time basis or alternatively could be combined with another similar position to create a new full-time position.
5. The reporting line for the Fire Chiefs should be to the Co-ordinator’s Office.
6. The Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Fire Chiefs, should establish and periodically review qualifying criteria for senior positions within the fire departments, including Fire Chief, Deputy Chief and Training Officer.
7. The Co-ordinator should be responsible for developing long term strategic plans for the local fire services, including matters such as capital and long term

³⁰ The position description is dated 15 March 2005.

- financial planning, major and local emergency response plans, mutual aid arrangements, service expansions, coordination with provincial and other regional agencies and similar matters.
8. The Co-ordinator should have an obligation to consult Fire Chiefs on all major initiatives related to common standards and strategic planning.
 9. For major emergencies, the Co-ordinator would be available as a resource, and could assume a role in accordance with the IMS³¹ model. Where assets in any one area are being stretched by a major situation, the Co-ordinator would be responsible for ensuring that other districts are notified of the situation, and alerted to the potential need of a call out (which would not detract from the ability of a Fire Chief to request aid from a neighbouring jurisdiction on his or her own initiative).
 10. The Co-ordinator would be responsible for recommending each local department's selection of their Chief to the CSRD Board.
 11. A formal line of communication between the fire services and Development Services should be established regarding new development applications or material changes to such applications. The Co-ordinator would be the contact for this line of communication and would ensure that the information was disseminated to the relevant departments and any view or concerns were provided to Development Services in a timely fashion.

8.1.2. Recommendation 2

Revise the structure and role of the Fire Suppression Committees.

During the facilitated meetings that were held with the FSCs, the Fire Chiefs, and to a lesser degree, the CSRD Board, it became clear that the time had come to review the purpose, function and role of the FSCs. There are significant challenges in operating a large volunteer structure, the primary role of which is to handle administrative matters. With 13 committees and annual member turn over, it was also proving a significant challenge for the CSRD to ensure that the committees all were aware of their duties, were meeting as required and were fulfilling their obligations. That being said, the

³¹ Incident Management System as applied by the Provincial Emergency Program and other agencies. See NFPA 1561.

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connection that the FSCs provide to the local community and their oversight on budgetary matters were highly valued.

On 12 January 2009, the Consultants and CSRD Staff met with the Fire Chiefs and representatives of the Fire Suppression Committees. Based on the input from that meeting, the original recommendation has been revised. There is a range of experiences related to the FSCs. In a number of cases, the FSCs are functioning at a very high level; in other cases, however, the converse is true. On the basis that some areas may wish to retain a local FSC, we would recommend a hybrid approach. A “senior” region-wide fire services advisory committee (the “Regional Committee”) would still be created, with one representative from each of the existing Fire Suppression Areas. However, a local FSC could still be maintained, if thought desirable or necessary. Concerns from this committee would be directed to the Co-ordinator through the representative on the Regional Committee. The Co-ordinator would meet with the Regional Committee but would not be expected to attend the meetings of the local committees. This concept was presented to the committee of the CSRD Board on 15 January 2009.

Regional Fire Services Advisory Committee

The following are the characteristics we see as inherent in the proposed Regional Committee:

1. The Regional Committee will be created by a bylaw, which will include the ability for the regional representative to establish a local sub-committee as noted below. Bylaw 5285 would be repealed and replaced.
2. The Regional Committee would be elected; we would suggest at least three year terms to ensure continuity.
3. The Regional Committee would be advisory, and would report directly to the Coordinator.
4. Terms of reference of the Regional Committee will be approved by the CSRD.
5. Regional Committee is to have a strategic/regional perspective which would include matters such as:
 - a. It would be safety and service focused.

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- b. It would be responsible for helping to manage risk and meet legislative requirements.
 - c. It would deal with regional and local issues in a round table format.
 - d. It would provide oversight to ensure consistency of safety initiatives and OH&S.
 - e. It would provide input into building maintenance issues/asset management from a regional perspective.
 - f. It would work to ensure the use of common Operational Guidelines.
 - g. It would provide input on the budget, relaying local input while developing a budget that reflects regional needs, with allocations to areas of the greatest need and contributions to reserves. They would be involved in setting annual and 5-year financial plans.
 - h. It would have a significant role in dealing with the public on regional fire issues.
 - i. Responsible for implementing the report's recommendations regarding fire prevention and education (as and if those recommendations are accepted and implemented).
6. There would be a need for CSRD staff support for the Regional Committee representatives for gathering input, managing meeting minutes, etc.
 7. The committee chair would report to the Co-ordinator, to whom the committee would submit an annual work plan setting out tasks, goals and responsibilities for the upcoming year.
 8. Meetings would be at least quarterly.

Local Fire Services Advisory Committee

The local advisory committee would have the following characteristics / areas of responsibility:

1. There would be a local focus.
2. The sub-committee would be an option, but not required by the CSRD.
3. Responsible for providing a review of local concerns and giving input to the Regional Committee through the Fire Suppression Area representative. Issues of concern would include:

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- a. Services being provided;
 - b. Budget from a local perspective;
 - c. Taxpayer concerns;
 - d. Recommendations on facility/usage; and
 - e. Building maintenance and usage issues from a local perspective.
4. The local sub-committee would also be important in driving public discussion at a local level, addressing local issues, including:
- a. Volunteer issues;
 - b. Public events, open houses;
 - c. Fire smart initiatives; and
 - d. Local fire prevention, and other safety and education initiatives.
5. Other local issues to be determined

Certain matters remain to be considered, including the manner of selecting / nominating individuals to the local committee. The manner of selection needs to be as inclusive and open as possible.

8.1.3. Recommendation 3

Update the Operational Criteria Bylaw (BL 5286) for local volunteer fire departments.

To reflect the changes to roles, authorities and reporting lines, the Operational Criteria Bylaw would need to be revised. In addition to dealing with matters arising out of Recommendations 1 and 2, this new bylaw should cover the following:

1. A generally worded provision covering the possible addition of new services or mandates, subject to appropriate approval. Depending on the nature of the addition, such approval would come from the Manager, Works Services.
2. A broader statement of the powers accorded to each Chief (or designate) to deal with emergency situations, both to cover current and any possible expanded

- duties.³² These powers also should explicitly extend to the chiefs of fire departments providing services to the CSRD under contract.³³
3. If service areas are combined as contemplated by Recommendation 5, the bylaw should provide for mutual aid between the different fire districts, subject to the terms of operational guidelines to be established by the Co-ordinator in consultation with the Fire Chiefs.
 4. It should explicitly permit fire service apparatus and crew to travel through unprotected areas or other jurisdictions for the purpose of answering a mutual aid call or to facilitate answering an emergency within their district.
 5. The Operational Criteria bylaw would be reviewed against the requirements of NFPA 1720 to ensure compliance with these standards.

8.1.4. Recommendation 4

Identify specific, fundamental administrative tasks currently handled by volunteers in the Fire Department and either:

- a. Upload the task to the CSRD; or**
- b. Provide systems or assistance that will reduce the burden on fire departments and facilitate CSRD oversight and review.**

In order to ensure that the administrative functions which are currently handled by the FSCs do not simply fall to the fire departments, as part of the change management planning, the most significant administrative tasks that need to be handled need to be identified, and responsibility for them assigned. Based on the facilitated discussions, it was apparent that a number of the maintenance obligations which lie with the FSCs are actually being performed by the fire departments already. There would need to be an overall assessment of what is being done and by whom. Some of these tasks would then become direct responsibilities of the Co-ordinator's office while some would remain with the individual fire departments. The level of support required by the departments in

³² As noted above, the current statement of a Fire Chief's powers is somewhat narrower than that permitted under the *Local Government Act* (BC) and the *Fire Services Act* (BC). For example, it does not explicitly permit the demolition of structures as part of fighting a fire. It also (in theory at least) does not confer any powers on a Fire Chief unless the assistance of the fire department has been requested.

³³ This is to clarify the powers that the contracted fire departments have when responding. The contracts are not always clear on this point.

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handling these functions (many of which the departments are already doing) should then be assessed and assistance provided by the CSRD.

Certain critical functions, such as the recording of training, will continue to be the responsibility of individual departments. To enable these records to be reviewed, the CSRD should, as a minimum, implement basic computerized forms and records keeping, which could be centrally stored and archived. This would involve providing each department with a computer and connectivity, along with appropriate training and support, but would have the advantage of allowing a centralized database to be created. See the section below relating to records management systems.

8.1.5. Recommendation 5

Merge the Fire Suppression Areas into a single service area with a single budget.

Operating a fire service to the required standards is expensive, even when it is largely staffed by volunteers; failing to meet those standards, however, is even more costly. Ensuring fire fighter and public safety has to be the principal aim of any consideration of how to restructure the fire service. An under-resourced department, which struggles to maintain its equipment and training, can hurt the fire service across the region. A single line of duty death, arising from poor training, poor command or poor equipment, can give rise to years of litigation, adversely affect recruitment and retention throughout the volunteer service and lead to immediate costs as various external agencies force changes to the way the region operates its departments.

As noted above, the tax bases of the current Fire Suppression Areas range dramatically in size, even though the basic operating costs for a department have a certain irreducible minimum (which, unfortunately, is rising as minimum training, equipment and other standards are increased). Even for the largest tax bases, however, the cost of apparatus or equipment renewal can, in any given year, significantly raise the overall tax rate.³⁴ By merging the existing service areas into a single area, with different districts, and creating a single budget, it will help reduce the dramatic swings in tax rates caused by equipment and apparatus purchases. It will enable reserves to be created without dramatically affecting local taxes (an additional \$0.05/\$1000 in taxes increases reserves by nearly \$210,000 – see Schedule K). It will also provide sufficient financial resources to ensure that there is funding for improved training, and do so without creating undue strains on any one group of taxpayers.

Notwithstanding the merger of the service area, “service districts” would remain largely as they are. Fire hall locations are based on certain prescribed standards to ensure a timely response to calls. While there are some response boundaries which perhaps should be reviewed (for example, between White Lake and Blind Bay/Sorrento), these

³⁴ Thus, the budget for Shuswap (Sorrento/Blind Bay), which is generally around \$350,000, is projected to jump in 2010 to \$550,000 as a result of planned capital expenditures. Based on the 2008 assessment values, this would have the effect of raising the tax rate for the service area by more than \$0.12/\$1,000, or about 38%. Source: derived from long term budgets and assessment values provided by the CSRD.

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represent minor adjustments rather than whole scale service changes. A formal consideration of the boundaries should be conducted by the Co-ordinator, in consultation with the affected fire departments.

The financial impact of such a merger will need close attention. The initial version of the report reviewed by staff and the committee of the CSRD was based on figures which included capital expenditures. These numbers are necessarily “lumpy”, but were the best available when the report was initially drafted. Staff has subsequently gone through the exercise of pulling out the capital expenditures and comparing operating costs. The following numbers reflect that work. The first table shows the calculation of a single combined tax rate. These tax rates are then compared with the existing actual tax rates for each Fire Suppression Area. The tax rates shown in the Tables are per \$1,000 of converted assessed value on land and improvements.

Table 1: Calculation of a Single, Combined Tax Rate

Fire Suppression Area	Converted Assessment	2008 Budget
Anglemont	\$41,150,132	\$92,066
Celista	\$29,466,104	\$112,937
Eagle Bay	\$44,165,289	\$106,991
Falkland	\$12,782,953	\$117,112
Malakwa	\$10,225,144	\$67,552
Nicholson	\$14,815,068	\$79,676
Ranchero/Deep Creek	\$18,465,809	\$77,204
Scotch Creek/Lee Creek	\$55,594,125	\$175,475
Silver Creek	\$9,714,778	\$98,357
Sorrento/Blind Bay	\$125,200,052	\$327,830
Swansea Point	\$15,438,630	\$71,968
Tappen/Sunnybrae	\$32,215,256	\$104,721
White Lake	\$8,997,098	\$146,499
TOTALS	\$418,230,438	\$1,578,388
Combined Tax Rate	\$0.3774	

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Table 2: Comparison of Actual and Combined Tax Rate

Fire Suppression Area	Actual & Tax Rates 2008	Combined Tax	Difference
Anglemont	\$ 0.394	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.017
Celista	\$ 0.485	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.108
Eagle Bay	\$ 0.274	\$0.3774	\$ 0.103
Falkland	\$ 1.137	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.759
Malakwa	\$ 0.725	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.348
Nicholson	\$ 0.921	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.544
Ranchero/Deep Creek	\$ 0.619	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.242
Scotch Creek/Lee Creek	\$ 0.309	\$0.3774	\$ 0.068
Silver Creek	\$ 1.174	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.797
Sorrento/Blind Bay	\$ 0.334	\$0.3774	\$ 0.043
Swansea Point	\$ 0.675	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.297
Tappen/Sunnybrae	\$ 0.409	\$0.3774	-\$ 0.032
White Lake	\$ 1.625	\$0.3774	-\$ 1.247

Note: The “actual” tax rate is based on the recalculated budget, where capital items have been removed. The revised budgets do include contributions to reserve in 2008 of \$380,000. See Schedule K.

Based on these calculations, two jurisdictions would have experienced higher average tax rates over the past three years (marked in yellow on the table), three would have been essentially the same (a difference of less than \$0.05 was treated as not being material) while the balance would have seen lower rates (many would be significantly lower). The details of these calculations, which were created by Staff, have been inserted in Schedule K, replacing the information formerly in that schedule.

Overall, we believe the benefits of creating a larger tax base, with the flexibility that such a base provides, outweigh the increase in fire tax rates that may be experienced by several jurisdictions. This issue, however, is one that will need to be considered carefully by the CSRD Board, and a clear communication of the benefits and costs will need to be provided to all of the taxpayers in the Fire Suppression Areas.

The other recommendations in this report, if acted upon, will add some additional costs as the Co-ordinator's office is expanded, more support is provided to help fire departments with their administrative obligations and a fire prevention/inspection function is added. Those additional costs will end up raising the tax rate for the combined area. This problem, however, will be experienced regardless of whether the service areas are merged. Indeed, depending on how the additional costs are apportioned, the cost of the suggested improvements may seriously impact the smaller fire suppression areas. If the charges are applied equally across each of the existing Fire Suppression Areas (as is currently done with the costs of the Co-ordinator), the additional costs will have a disproportionate impact on the areas with smaller tax bases. The tax rates for the areas with smaller tax bases potentially will rise significantly if a service area merger is not effected.

There are certain legal issues related to such a merger that will require further consideration, the most significant of which relates to the two Fire Suppression Areas – Falkland and Eagle Bay – which currently have debt outstanding in relation to the construction of their respective fire halls.³⁵ Under the *Community Charter (BC)*, a merger of service areas in a municipality where one of the service areas has outstanding debt, requires approval of the taxpayers unless the debt is left behind. The CSRD, however, is governed by the LGA, which is silent on this point.

We explored this issue with Derek Trimmer, a director in the Ministry of Community Development (the "Ministry"). Mr. Trimmer was very supportive of the general concept of merging service areas to create a tax base with better critical mass, and felt it was the kind of creative solution that the government was hoping regions would be examining. He noted that it was perfectly acceptable to merge service areas, even where one of those areas had debt. In such cases, they recommended that voter approval be obtained, and if the effects of transferring the debt were very significant, that the approval be done on a service area by service area basis. The Minister (through the Inspector) would, in such instances, exercise his discretion to require voter approval under section 802(4) or (5) of the LGA if the region did not select this process itself.

³⁵ Eagle Bay's debt is relatively small – less than \$55,000 – and will be repaid in full by 2011. Falkland's debt is much more recent. The principal amount is \$524,000, and repayment will not be completed until 2028.

In this case, he noted that the approach was both novel and innovative, with potential long term benefits for all of the service areas. As such, he felt that the CSRD should work with the Ministry to refine the concept and determine the appropriate level of voter approvals. If the CSRD wished to proceed, he felt that it should put together a memo explaining the purpose, advantages, costs and benefits, to be reviewed with the Ministry. He will provide a contact at the Ministry for this purpose.

Implementation Issues

Merger Bylaw

A new bylaw, repealing the existing establishment bylaws, merging the service areas and continuing the service, would be required. Under section 802.1 of the LGA, a merger of service areas may be effected by an amendment of the relevant establishing bylaws. Amendments to establishing bylaws may be approved either (i) in the manner applicable to the original establishing bylaw (so, as though you were offering the service for the first time); or (ii) with the consent of at least 2/3 of the participants.³⁶ Under the LGA, the term “participants” means, “in relation to an electoral participating area, the director of the electoral area”.³⁷ It should be noted, though, that the LGA permits the Minister to require that the amending bylaw be approved in the manner of the original establishing bylaw or to require that the amendments receive approval of some or all of the electors.³⁸

As noted in the discussion above, the LGA is silent on the issue of transferring debt along with a merger of service areas and the Ministry has recommended that the issue be reviewed with them. From a “fairness” standpoint, since the debts being transferred would also be accompanied by the underlying asset (i.e., the fire hall), there is a strong argument that no disservice is being done to the taxpayers in the other Fire Suppression Areas. It is not as though an operating deficit was being transferred, which would be objectionable. That being said, it is likely prudent, given the extent of the recommended reform and the fact that several of the Fire Suppression Areas will see some overall average tax increases, to seek voter approval of the proposed service area merger.

³⁶ LGA, s. 802(1) (a) and (b).

³⁷ LGA, s. 5.

³⁸ LGA, ss. 802(4) and 802(5).

Approval of the electors may be obtained either from each area separately, or, if approved by a resolution supported by at least 2/3 of the CSRD Board, from the entire proposed service area. In the case of the former, a majority in each of the service areas must support the bylaw; in the case of the latter, a majority of votes in favour of the proposal across the entire area is required.³⁹ After consultation with the Ministry, the CSRD Board will have to take a view as how best to proceed.

Implementation Study and Implementation Costs

As suggested above, further review of the proposed integration is likely warranted. The section on government grants (see “Grants and Other Revenue Sources” below) notes that grant funding may be available from the Ministry of Community Development to cover some of the costs related to the planning and public consultation process (to a maximum of \$40,000). A grant also is available to facilitate the implementation of any significant restructuring (including significant changes in local service structure). Such grants are intended to cover “transitional expenses”. The maximum amount is discretionary, and can cover up to the full amount of approved direct and actual costs.⁴⁰ In our discussions with the Ministry, they certainly felt that it was worth the trouble of making an application, and may provide some financial support to cover some of the initial costs for the administrative upload and perhaps some of the infrastructure needed to centralize administration and improve oversight and control.

Change Management Issues

We recognize that the proposals involve making significant changes to the way the fire service is structured and operated. Such changes are not always easy to handle, and if not properly implemented, can adversely affect morale and operations. Based on our understanding of the changing environment for delivering fire services, and the challenges facing the current structure, we believe that these recommendations are

³⁹ Voting procedures and methods are provided for in ss. 801, 801.1 and 801.2. It should be noted that, in theory at least, it would be possible to proceed by the “alternative approval process”, since the tax rate is less than \$0.50/\$1,000. If the tax rate then had to rise above this amount, recent revisions to the LGA permit amendments to establishment bylaws increasing the tax rate by up to 25% without seeking voter approval. This approach, however, is not recommended.

⁴⁰ See: “Local Government Grants Regulations” made under the *Local Government Grants Act* (BC), Part 3, “Conditional Planning Grants” (in particular ss. 9(d) and 11(5)), and Part 4, “Conditional Implementation Grants”, Division 4, “Local Government Restructure Implementation Grants”, ss. 22 and 23.

essential if the CSRD is properly to manage its risk of providing fire protection services, while delivering a service that is professional, safe and effective.

To effect change on this scale requires that there be a clearly developed plan and time scale for implementation, effective communication of the goals and rationale for the changes, and ongoing communication of progress. No change to structure is ever completely smooth. There must be strong support for the change from both the Board and CSRD staff, and this support must be regularly and effectively communicated as part of the process.

The CSRD is fortunate that its current Co-ordinator is well regarded. The facilitated discussions and the meetings with various levels of CSRD staff, made it clear that the current Co-ordinator enjoys great respect. His knowledge and experience of fire service operations commands great respect and the changes already introduced have been recognized as positive. Ultimately, the success of these proposals with the fire departments will depend heavily on the Co-ordinator, who will need to be able to count on the support of other CSRD staff and the Board as the structure is revised.

One of the potentially thorny change management issues that arises is the question of titles. With the proposed centralization of authority and uploading of administrative responsibilities, the question of an appropriate title for the Co-ordinator and department chiefs becomes an issue. Although the topic was raised during the facilitated meetings with both the Fire Chiefs and the FSCs, given the other issues that were being considered, it did not attract much discussion. To the extent that it was discussed, there was little interest in effecting any change (and some concerns that if there was change, it would adversely affect recruiting, morale and the local department's connection with the community it serves).

In general, a "Fire Chief" has two primary roles in a department: to be the primary point of contact with the governing body and the community; and to provide leadership and establish the direction for the operation of all aspects of the department and the conduct of the members. The revised structure creates something of a hybrid. The existing Fire Chiefs will still be expected to play a significant role as a contact for their local communities, and to provide leadership for their department members. A number of

significant responsibilities for fire department operations, however, will ultimately rest with the Office of the Co-ordinator (although there will remain a formal obligation to consult with the individual chiefs on many of these matters).

Other regions have grappled with this issue in the past. The benchmarking exercise revealed that the Kootenay Boundary Regional District (“KBRD”) has the most centralized structure of those areas surveyed. The KBRD established a centralized, regional fire department in 1982, and has operated it successfully since that time. As part of the transition, a single “Fire Chief” was appointed at the regional level, while the title for other fire chiefs was changed to “District Fire Chief”, reflecting their authority within their specific portions of the region.

The KBRD encountered some unhappiness at the time this change was proposed, and decided as an interim measure to permit existing fire chiefs to retain their title until they stepped down or retired, after which any successor assumed the title of “District Chief”. We are aware of a second and more recent example involving another regional district (which was not part of our survey) where some effort was made to change the reporting structure of the departments and titles of existing fire chiefs. The change of title became a significant point of contention and the initiative was abandoned.

In the context of the functional and structural changes contemplated by this report, the question of titles is a relatively minor one. The substantive changes are ultimately more important and, provided that the authorities and responsibilities are clear, we do not believe that this issue needs to be addressed at this time. If this matter is raised in the future, we would note that it is significant to those affected, and any proposed changes should be dealt with sympathetically and involve consultation with and consideration of the views of the affected groups.

9. Fire Prevention, Inspections and Public Education

9.1. Fire Inspections / Fire Prevention Function

The primary reason for the existence of a fire department is to prevent loss of life and minimize property loss and damage from risk of fire. The first line of defense is the

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elimination of conditions under which fire will ignite. Fire prevention is predicated on three key factors:

1. inspections to identify building and fire code compliance and other potential fire hazards,
2. educating the public on ways to prevent fires, and
3. investigating fires to learn what caused the fire in order to prevent a reoccurrence or to strengthen future fire and building codes.

When these three efforts fail, fire suppression becomes necessary. While there is a cost attached to the service which, at best, can only be partially recovered, it is less expensive than the alternative. Fire damage within the 13 fire suppression areas over the past 3 years has averaged just under \$2.0 million per year.⁴¹ It is for these reasons that local governments and their fire departments find ways to provide prevention and inspection services. It is noteworthy that for municipal governments in British Columbia, fire prevention and fire safety inspection are mandated requirements,⁴² while fire suppression remains an optional service provided under bylaw by local governments.

Fire inspections ultimately save lives and significantly reduce fire risk. They are a key element in an effective fire service. As such, even though the requirement is optional for a regional district, it is worthwhile investing the necessary resources to implement this function.

Statutory Background: Inspections and LAFCs

The obligation to provide a fire inspection service is currently limited to municipalities, although regional governments can choose to provide it based on interest or identified need. Section 26 of the Fire Services Act places responsibility on Municipal Councils to develop a “regular system” of inspections of “hotels” and “public buildings” (as defined) within their community. The definition of “hotel” includes “any club or building where lodging is provided except a private dwelling”. The definition of “public building” includes a “factory, warehouse, store, mill, school, hospital, theatre or other building other than a private dwelling”. Neither the Fire Services Act nor the Fire Commissioner imposes any

⁴¹ Source: Fire Services Co-ordinator’s Annual Reports for 2005 – 2007. See also Appendix H.

⁴² Fire Services Act, s. 26.

specific requirements on the substance of how fire inspections are to be conducted or even their frequency (beyond being “regular”). These issues are left to local governments to determine in accordance with their resources and risk assessment.

In many jurisdictions, staff conducting fire inspections are also charged with responsibility for investigating the cause of fires. In areas of the province that are not municipalities, the Fire Services Act provides that the appointment of Local Assistants to the Fire Commissioner (“L AFC”) must be made by the Fire Commissioner⁴³. It goes on to require that all fires within the jurisdiction of the L AFC be investigated, and reported to the Fire Commissioner.⁴⁴ Further, the L AFC is to inspect fire hazards upon complaint or without complaint, if deemed advisable.⁴⁵ In fulfilling their obligations under the Fire Services Act, L AFCs have the powers of a peace officer.⁴⁶ The Co-ordinator is the only L AFC appointed in the CSRD at this time and, as such, is responsible for reporting fires to the Fire Commissioner. He does not provide fire safety/prevention inspections, though, as there is no requirement to do so. It is worth noting that, in his role as L AFC, the Co-ordinator is providing a region-wide service, not just a service within the Fire Suppression Areas.

Through the benchmarking process (see Appendix G) it was learned that, of the five regional districts surveyed, four do not provide this as a service. Only one regional fire service provides comprehensive fire inspections to all public buildings and they do so using career staff. Although not included within the benchmarking review, it was learned that North Okanagan Regional District provides fire safety/prevention inspections throughout the region and also offer this service by contract to some municipalities within their boundaries.

Implementation Issues

In the event the CSRD decides to implement a fire safety/prevention inspection program, at a minimum, any personnel who perform this function will need to be trained in

⁴³ Fire Services Act, s. 6(1)(c). This contrasts with municipalities, where a fire chief is automatically the L AFC or, in municipalities without a fire department, the mayor takes on that role – sections 6.1(a) and (b).

⁴⁴ Fire Services Act, ss. 9(1) and 9(2).

⁴⁵ Fire Services Act, ss. 24 and 21

⁴⁶ Fire Services Act, s. 7.

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inspection and enforcement procedures and skilled in administering the requirements of the Fire Services Act and BC Fire Code. A typical inspection will focus on both potential or actual technical failures (maintenance and replacement of items that could fail) and man-made situations (e.g., debris, poor storage of flammables, etc.). If it is a structural issue, or an item that is required to meet a specified standard, it will require a knowledge of the Fire Code, the Building Code and other possible source documents (such as standards set by NFPA, CSA, ASME and ULC, to name but a few).⁴⁷ The importance of a well-grounded training program prior to commencing fire inspection services cannot be understated. This level of training can be assured by requiring a minimum training level to NFPA Fire Inspector 1 or equivalent.

To be credible, a system of inspections should ensure that at least one inspection per year is conducted. If an unsafe condition is found, the owner/occupier should be given a written notice to correct the deficiency along with a reference to the code violation. It is then essential to ensure that a follow-up inspection is conducted or that some confirmation of compliance is received. This can include receiving a verification of required maintenance or correction of the problem by a qualified person. The inspection frequency for certain types of buildings - such as those that have a public assembly area, a licensed beverage establishment, a mercantile or service business, etc. – may vary from this, based on a risk assessment (including, as the database is developed, whether there have been prior infractions). Some of the costs of an inspection program can be recovered by charging fees for re-inspections to ensure compliance with a previous order.

With the able assistance of the Co-ordinator, an effort was made to quantify the number of “hotels and public buildings” within the CSRD that would require fire safety/prevention inspections. The following is a rough estimate of that number.

Table 1: Building Count

Building Type	Approximate Number
Commercial	320
Industrial	82

⁴⁷ Canadian Standards Association, American Association of Mechanical Engineers and Underwriters’ Laboratory of Canada. There are a total of 14 sources of “other documents” cross-referenced in the Fire Code.

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Schools	10
Community Centres, Senior Centres, Home Care Facilities	30
Multi-family residential (over 6,000 sq ft.)	8
Summer camps	20
Total	470

Although these numbers are approximate, it enables an “order of magnitude” estimate of the likely workload if inspections are to be conducted. In addition, knowing the number of schools, senior centres, care homes, and summer camps will enable the CSRD to determine approximate need for potential fire safety training of seasonal staff in summer camps and public education programs. The administration of a comprehensive fire inspection program within the CSRD will be impacted by distances between communities. This should be considered as an environmental aspect to implementation of this program

The potential workload generated by having some 470 buildings to inspect, will be affected by a number of factors, including: the size of the coverage area; number of inquiries received by individuals seeking to learn the requirements that they must meet; the need to review fire safety plans for those premises which have a fire alarm system, and the time needed to research requirements applicable to the different buildings encountered based on provincial codes and local bylaws. In general, an estimate of one to three hours per building is reasonable for an inspection, record creation, data input, research and any necessary follow-up compliance check. On that basis, the workload (not including travel time) for inspections would range from a low of 470 to a high of about 1500 hours per year. Assuming that the inspections balance out reasonably well between “long and short”, once the program is operating, it likely would take about 1,000 hours per year to conduct the inspections.

During the start up, and for the first year or two, it can be anticipated that more time would be required (closer to the 1500 hours), as there will be more original research required, and the chances of buildings being non-compliant will be greater. There will be a necessary “public education” component to this inspection role, as the service is implemented, since it will be the first time most of the building owners have had to

consider these issues in the context of the applicable code requirements. It may also prove beneficial to implement the program in phases, to give both the staff and the public time to become accustomed to the new system. As an order of magnitude estimate, therefore, we believe that a single FTE, attached and reporting to the Office of the Co-ordinator, would be required.

Records of inspections should be incorporated into the Record Management System (RMS) that is discussed in more detail below. Technology is currently in use which enables fire inspectors to enter data directly into the RMS using a handheld tablet computer or similar wireless device. In regions where there is no connectivity, the information can be downloaded to the main RMS later. This enables the inspector either to print the results of the inspection immediately for the affected building owner, or to send it at the end of the day from the office. It has the advantage of eliminating the end-of-day paperwork associated with the manual entry of findings. It also allows the owner to have a written report almost immediately, which generally is believed to lead to better compliance results where an infraction has been identified.

In addition to the obvious benefit of preventing or reducing the cause or spread of fire, inspections can be an important part of addressing both familiarity with buildings and including information into a pre-incident planning program that will be of value to responders and fire departments in identifying unique features and potential hazards in the event of an emergency. The inspection system becomes an integral aspect of fire department planning, helping to reduce risks when a fire does break out.

9.1.1. Recommendation 6

That in 2011 once the CSRD has worked with a region wide Fire Services Advisory Committee, the CSRD review a program of fire prevention, fire inspection and related LAFC duties, including administration of the Fire Services Act and enforcement of the BC Fire Code. This will be contingent on the implementation of a building inspection function as described in Recommendation 8.

9.1.2. Recommendation 7

That staff who conducts fire prevention and safety inspections be trained to a minimum NFPA Fire Inspector 1 level or equivalent.

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A key component to the creation of an effective fire prevention program is the enforcement of applicable codes and standards related to new construction. In British Columbia, new construction, major renovations of buildings and demolitions, are subject to requirements of the BC Building Code. The Fire Code, which would form the backbone of a fire inspection system, is the companion document to the Building Code. It is difficult to enforce a code for maintenance of safety systems, however, if the initial construction and safety measures are not in compliance with the primary document. It is therefore essential to ensure that new buildings (or major renovations) are constructed to current standards. In the case of existing buildings, the aim is to ensure that a reasonable degree of essential safety measures are present, focusing on exiting, early warning (fire alarms), and planning for escape.

Technically, all buildings constructed within the province must conform with the Building Code. Without enforcement of the Building Code, however, it can make the implementation of an effective fire and safety inspection program challenging. The CSRD currently has only one area where there are permit and inspection processes in place. Pursuant to Bylaw 630, passed 21 September 2001, inspection and building permits were required in a portion of Electoral Area 'F' (essentially covering Anglemont, Celista, Lee Creek and Scotch Creek).

The benchmarking survey (Appendix G) found that, of the five regional districts surveyed:

- three require building permits and provide building inspections throughout their regions;
- one requires that permits be taken out by the contractor/developer even though inspections are not performed and compliance is left to the developer/contractor or registered professional (e.g., architect or engineer); and
- one region provides building inspection to its own premises only.

The CSRD should be aware that the B.C. Office of Housing and Construction Standards is proposing to seek a legislative requirement requiring Building Code enforcement throughout the province. Their proposal notes that this would require:

“[a]

- review of building design and construction to assess code compliance, and
 - steps taken to correct non-compliance,
- by a third party independent of the building project”.⁴⁸

The independent third party “may be a local government, the BC Safety Authority (BCSA) [or] a certified private-sector agency”⁴⁹. If this proposal becomes law, the CSRD may well be forced to commence Building Code enforcement, or at least enable it to be conducted by another agency.

Further, as noted in a memorandum dated 30 January 2008 from Marcin Pachinski, Planner – CSRD Development Services, to the CSRD Board, the CSRD is proposing to undertake a comprehensive review of zoning and land use bylaws in each electoral area following the completion of the Official Community Plan process.⁵⁰ We believe that such review would provide an excellent opportunity to consider the implementation of a planning and inspection service region-wide, to ensure that there is general conformity with the Building Code. This enforcement is required to bolster the effectiveness of any fire prevention and fire inspection system that is to be established.

9.1.3. Recommendation 8

That the CSRD adopt bylaws and procedures to enforce the BC Building Code throughout the region.

9.2. Public Education

Public fire education has been increasingly recognized in recent years as an effective means of engaging the community in the prevention or mitigation of fires and related hazards that create risk to life and property. It also helps build public awareness of their local fire departments and can be an effective public relations tool. Based on the facilitations with the FSCs and the Fire Chiefs, it appears that some departments already

⁴⁸ Source: Accessed online at <http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/modernization/updatedBCE.htm>, on 27 July 2007.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Marcin Pachinski, Planner – Works Services Department, *Memorandum to Chair and Directors*, “Proposed Anglemont Zoning Amendment (CSRD) Bylaw No. 650-5 (Community Sewer & Water)”, 30 January 2008, at p. 2.

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conduct some limited public education initiatives. These efforts, however, are not coordinated across the region and support for the potential of developing a broader public fire education program was expressed during consultations. While public fire education can take a wide variety of forms, the following areas are ones which cover the most important aspects and potential audiences:

School-based and Senior Citizen Safety Programs

Fire safety awareness and safe practices education directed at elementary school-children and senior citizens is a critical element in any successful education program as these are the two demographic groups most at risk.

There are a number of demographic-based public education programs currently developed and available for fire departments to deliver to school-aged children and also to senior citizens. Within the CSRD, there are 10 elementary schools, 30 community centres/senior centres/care homes that could be included within this initiatives. In addition, there are 20 summer camps that can benefit from fire safety training and fire prevention programs each year. Programs that are directed to each of the target audiences can be purchased directly from the NFPA or through the BC Public and Life Safety Education Committee that is administered through the Office of the Fire Commissioner.

Educating the public on the risks associated with interface fires

Interface fires and the risks that are present in BC communities have attracted the attention of most residents of the interior. One of the recommendations in the Filmon Report into the 2003 wildfires that resulted in close to 350 homes being burned and millions of dollars in property loss, is that the public education program entitled, "Fire Smart" be adopted and promoted.

The "Fire Smart" program is used by all five regional districts and their fire departments that were surveyed during this review. In addition to promotion of safety measures through the Fire Smart program, many centres throughout British Columbia participate jointly with staff from Ministry of Forests in promoting fire safety in interface areas.

Media releases on current fire safety initiatives

The media can be useful by keeping current information before the public. Local media outlets in small communities are generally helpful and are looking for items that will be of interest to their readers. Items of interest could include information on the various safety weeks that are declared in BC, for example, Fire Prevention Week, Burn Awareness Week, Emergency Preparedness Week, to name a few.

In addition, members of the public should be afforded the opportunity to tour their local fire hall. An 'open-house' is often held during Fire Prevention Week in October that also encourages home owners to change their battery in their smoke alarm on the same weekend that they change their clocks. Local media are often interested in assisting both with the announcements as well as being present at the events. In both cases, the events also help raise the profile of the fire services within their local communities, and can be used to help encourage new volunteers to join or generally to educate the public as to the role and duties of the fire department.

Hazards associated with Fireworks

One of the major issues identified in the facilitated discussions with the Fire Chiefs was the need to raise the awareness of permanent and seasonal residents to the significant risks posed by fireworks particularly during dry summer weather.

The risks posed by the use of fireworks and resulting potential for death and injury have resulted in some jurisdictions passing bylaws to control and/or ban consumer or family fireworks. In British Columbia, there has been a reluctance to provide sweeping legislation on this topic and any restrictions on their use and sale are left up to local government to deal with as they see fit.

Fireworks were identified as a risk that has generated serious concern amongst all fire departments in the CSRD. As an interim step and until such time as this matter is resolved at the political level, it is prudent that the fire services develop a unified approach to advising the public of the risk that fireworks pose, both in terms of igniting possible structural or interface fires and injury from accidental (or deliberate) misuse.

There are several public education programs that focus on fireworks and problems that result from this hazard.

The NFPA publishes periodic announcements that highlight the ongoing concern with fireworks. A recent bulletin indicated that on a single holiday in the United States – July 4, 2006 – some 1,800 structure fires, 700 motor vehicle fires, and 60 injuries resulted from fireworks-related accidents or misuse. These statistics provide a basis for the program, which should be designed to warn of the risks and advise as to the proper and safe use of consumer fireworks. As part of the education program, an effort should be made to compile regional statistics on problems emanating from fireworks.

Although a specific recommendation is not made in this area, it would be prudent for the Fire Chiefs and the Co-ordinator to develop a position paper related to the need for a bylaw to better regulate the sale and use of fireworks throughout the CSRD.

Value of the Volunteer Fire Department to the Community

As noted above, one of the benefits of a “public education” program is the opportunity to increase public awareness of the value of and need for community support for volunteer fire departments. There are a number of reports that focus on this as a means of recruiting fire department members and gaining public support. There are several points that could be emphasized within such a campaign:

1. Volunteer fire departments provide life-critical emergency support when needed by the community.
2. Fire departments staffed with volunteers provide a substantial cost savings to local governments compared with career departments.
3. Property-owners receive significant insurance savings as a result of having a fire department which meets the required standards. These savings typically outweigh the tax cost of maintaining the department.
4. The two main ways to demonstrate this benefit are “actual cost savings” and “cost avoidance.” This amount is calculated based on actual records of the volunteers’ time commitment, including training, responses, public education efforts, vehicle maintenance, station upkeep and any other contribution that

- volunteers make to the fire department. Cost avoidance is the amount of money that would be spent to pay a career fire fighters or an external company to perform the work.
5. The actual value of volunteer firefighter departments is reflected in the amount of time that volunteer firefighters contribute to the community.

The results of the benchmarking survey (Appendix G) revealed that all of the surveyed regions provide public fire education to some extent: all regions utilize the 'Fire Smart' program in areas where the potential for interface or wildfire exists; two regions conduct public fire safety programs in schools and senior citizens centres; two regional districts provide public education in schools during Fire Prevention Week (October); and one regional district limits their public education effort to distribution of fire safety brochures.

9.2.1. Recommendation 9

That the CSRD establish a coordinated public fire safety education program that is available to all fire departments throughout the CSRD following the review with a region wide Fire Services Advisory Committee as noted in Recommendation #6.

The coordinator of the program should be given adequate training and orientation to understand the resources that are available and how to administer this program. This could be an integral part of the duties assigned to the fire prevention inspector. This also could be added to the mandate for the new "Fire Services Advisory Committee", who would assist the fire prevention inspector in this regard.

10. Other Issues

10.1. *Fire Department Boundaries*

An administrative review of current fire department boundaries and response distances was undertaken. This review was conducted using similar criteria to that used during the early stages of establishing fire protection within the region.

Fire Hall Placement / Satellite Halls

In a telephone conversation with the former regional fire commissioner, now retired, it was learned that initially fire hall locations were determined in concert with Eugene

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Lalonde, Administrator in the early to mid 1980's. The criteria used were based on the Fire Underwriter's requirements that fire halls be within a 5 mile radius (8KM) and include certain required design features.

During this review it was noted that some distances within fire protection areas far exceeded the 8 km (5 mile) radius even using rough calculation. This was discussed with the Co-ordinator, who indicates that the areas outside the limit are generally uninhabited and will not see development in the foreseeable future. A second hall cannot be justified in these circumstances. A satellite hall will only be built if the permanent population or tax-base of a populated area is sufficient to support it, both in terms of cost and staffing of the new hall.

Some new halls are currently being contemplated. As we did not undertake a formal operational review, and have not conducted an assessment of existing response times, we are not in a position to comment on these proposals. In Sorrento/Blind Bay, there is a plan to replace the # 1 Fire Hall, as the existing hall has become high maintenance and does not suit current needs. The new hall will be built in the same location as this has been found to be centrally located within the response area.

A second area that may be slated for a satellite fire hall is within the Scotch Creek/Lee Creek Fire Suppression Area. The placement of a satellite hall in the eastern end of that area is considered warranted primarily due to population growth, slow response times, and current levels of traffic congestion. This will be a 'simple' fire hall with two bays and a training room.

Considering the criteria under which the fire halls were originally located, the current locations appear adequate and will remain so for the foreseeable future based on projected permanent growth projections. At some point in future, however, the CSRD may wish to engage in a fire hall location study that will focus on minimizing response times by bracketing responses within 4-minute response or 8 minute response polygons.

Fire Suppression Boundaries

In several areas, a close review of the maps showing the existing fire suppression boundaries revealed that in some instances a responding department must leave the

Fire Suppression Area to get to its call. The most obvious example of this affects the Silver Creek Fire Department, which must pass through a portion of the City of Salmon Arm to get to properties in the northwest corner of its Fire Suppression Area. It is not entirely clear from the Operational Criteria Bylaw that this travel is permitted, and when that bylaw is amended, specific permission should be granted to permit such travel to occur.

If the service areas are merged, it will also be worthwhile to consider actual response times from fire halls to determine whether any boundaries should be adjusted. In some areas, for example between White Lake and Sorrento/Blind Bay, response times may be improved if the boundaries are adjusted.

10.2. Grants and other Revenue Sources

One of the issues the Consultants were asked to consider was whether there were any funding or grant sources that the CSRD could access in connection with the implementing any of recommendations made in this report. In particular, a provincial government document entitled “Building Stronger Communities” suggests that support for upgrading fire services may become available. Within this report the Task Force suggests that the level of fire protection within communities and regional districts could be enhanced if the Province provided one-time funding to assist in the development and implementation of regional capability and support initiatives in this area. The report suggests that this funding could be linked to monies collected through the Provincial Fire Insurance Premium Tax.⁵¹

While our discussions with the Ministry of Community Development indicate that such support may yet be forthcoming, no projects or grants have been announced in relation to the “Building Stronger Communities” document. In addition, staff in the Office of the Fire Commissioner have indicated that the funding that was available through the “Fire Innovations Program” has been suspended at this time. It was noted that grants for initiatives under the previous criteria were used primarily to explore opportunities and to stimulate discussions. Apparently, some lobbying is taking place to encourage provincial

⁵¹ These tax monies initially were directed to be used to fund the Office of the Fire Commissioner. Since being transferred back to “general revenue” some years ago, there has been a high level of resistance at the Provincial level to allow access to these funds aside from the routine budget process through Provincial Ministries.

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officials to extend this program in order to encourage regional districts to implement fire safety programs and training projects, and to offset the initial costs of implementing regional fire safety, prevention, inspection and public education programs. Unfortunately, there is no indication as to if or when this program will be revitalized.

There are some other grants that may be worth considering. On the Ministry of Community Development website, there are several grants which are intended to provide funding for, among other things, material changes in the way they are structured or the way they deliver local services. The two most relevant grants appear to be the “Restructure Planning Grants” and the “Restructure Implementation Grants”. The former is limited to \$40,000; the latter has no monetary limit, but is restricted to the direct “transitional” or “implementation” costs involved. Discussions with Derek Trimmer at the Ministry confirmed that it would be worthwhile making an application under these programs, if the delivery of fire services is to be restructured.

Ordinary fire suppression activities do not appear to have any grants available to them. However, grants are available for dealing with risks emanating from potential wildfires and interface fires. The following grants were identified:⁵²

- “Community Wildfire Protection” plans and Program (from the UBCM and Natural Resources Canada). The UBCM will provide a maximum amount of \$15,000 based on 50% cost sharing for developing a community plan to deal with wildfire, while Natural Resources Canada will provide up to 25% of the cost of programs aimed at dealing with fire hazards arising from mountain pine beetle infestations.
- Fuel Management Initiatives for Communities at Risk to Wildfire (jointly offered by the UBCM and Ministry of Forests and Range). There are three separate programs available, providing support for community wildfire planning and dealing with issues of “fuel management” – i.e., controlling the interface situation.

⁵² The grants are searchable on the CivicInfoBC website: <http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/18.asp>, using the terms “fire” or “fire protection”.

10.3. Proficiency Criteria for Fire Chiefs

In the 'good-old-days' for many volunteer departments the selection of their fire chief was based solely on a consideration of who was thought to be the best firefighter or the most popular person on practice night. Today, volunteer fire departments are subject to increasing regulatory scrutiny and must focus on operational integrity and business excellence similar to an organization that is led by full time staff. The strength and quality of an organization's cohesiveness, effectiveness and motivation depend on the strength and leadership of its leader. Much has been written and discussed regarding the need for trained fire fighters to provide safe and effective emergency response, although where leadership is poorly trained or ineffective it becomes a problem that multiplies and undermines the effectiveness of the entire organization. As the fire service changes, so does the demand for demonstrated proficiencies at various levels.⁵³

A reported entitled, "Call to Action"⁵⁴ published by the International Fire Chiefs Association, asserts that, "the lack of quality leadership is the most critical issue confronting the volunteer fire service" and that the "lack of quality local leadership is cited as the most significant problem to retaining volunteer fire fighters." The challenge now becomes one of ensuring that the leadership in each fire department is trained, knowledgeable, skilled and able to deal with issues at that level. Leadership within an organization does not begin at the point that a person is needed to take the top position, but rather, begins with the introduction of an individual to that organization. This discussion will consider those proficiencies (also known as competencies) that can be achieved through verifiable training and are desirable within each rank of the volunteer fire department, in addition to criteria for upward movement into more senior positions within the department.

During the facilitated meetings with the Fire Chiefs and in subsequent discussions with the Co-ordinator, the question of appropriate proficiencies and criteria for fire chiefs and officers was raised. One of the foremost concerns was the limited amount of time that

⁵³ Proficiencies can otherwise be defined as aptitude, competencies, skills, demonstrated ability, and expertise in a specific discipline or function.

⁵⁴ Call to Action (March 2004) was published by the International Association of Fire Chiefs and is otherwise known as the "Blue Ribbon Report, Preserving and improving the future of the volunteer fire service."

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volunteer fire officers have to perform all the duties that are expected of them, in addition to training for additional levels of responsibility. Most of the training that is now being provided is directed at improving technical knowledge, rather than developing administrative or leadership skills, making this subject area a new topic for discussion.

Currently there are draft descriptions of duties for fire chief, deputy fire chiefs, captains, lieutenants, incident safety officers and training officers within the CSRD fire services structure. For example, the preferred training for a Fire Chief lists the following criteria as being desirable:

- Structural fire ground command including strategy and tactics
- Basic fire cause determination
- Emergency vehicle driving
- Pumps and pumping
- Live fire 1, 2, 3,
- Basic Fire Fighting certificate (9 topic areas) or equivalent
- Air brakes
- Critical incident stress training

Although these topics are essential and form the basic 'need-to-know' for fire officers, they are essentially a higher level of technical fire training. Missing are topics that will prepare a fire chief for areas of supervision, leadership, and administrative responsibility. While some departments require NFPA Fire Officer 1 (NFPA 1021) to be completed for promotion to an officer level, the time demands can be prohibitive and demoralizing, particularly within volunteer departments. As noted elsewhere in this report, however, the Minister's Order makes NFPA standards the basis for training requirements in British Columbia, and these requirements need, therefore, to be considered.

Chiefs and their officers clearly require additional training in order to improve their ability to fulfil their roles and to meet the requirements set out in the Minister's Order. Using NFPA 1021, Fire Officer 1 as a guide, the following is a list of the proficiencies required by a Fire Officer that should be considered for adoption by the CSRD:

- Governance and administration of the fire department
- Leadership/supervisor skills

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- Risk assessment – identification, responsibilities and standards
- Incident Command System / Fire Scene Management (F-120/F-160)
- Financial management/budget preparation
- Services and limitations to what you can/should provide and why
- Human resources
- Physical resources – apparatus and buildings
- Training and competencies
- Internal/external relationships

Although the requirement for additional training was raised during the meetings with the FSCs and the Fire Chiefs we would emphasize that there is a need for additional consultation with all members of the fire departments who potentially will be impacted. For volunteers, there are “costs” associated with obtaining this training, beyond just the monetary cost of the training. The CSRD will need to review the commitment involved, and find an appropriate means of recognizing the investment of time required by volunteers to achieve these higher standards. It would be inappropriate to require extensive training to qualify as either a Fire Chief or officer if no additional compensation was provided. Indeed, it could lead to a situation where insufficient volunteers were prepared to take on such roles.

The concept of minimum training also impacts the issue of tenure for a Chief (and, potentially, for officers). Notionally, at least, the present practice within the CSRD is for the members of each department annually to select their Chief, an approach that will not be consistent with a requirement that the Chief obtain substantial additional training. While such elections are not provided for in any of the underlying bylaws governing the CSRD’s fire service, it is a widely recognized practice and any changes to it will need to be clearly and carefully reviewed with all involved.

In implementing these recommended changes, there also is a need to allow sufficient time for members to access the training that is being introduced, with appropriate transition provisions being developed. It may also be that some existing members will be accepted as having met an equivalency to the standards being proposed based on training and experience that was acceptable prior to a new system being introduced.

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The additional training requires further commitment from members; it also requires an additional funding commitment from the CSRD to cover the training costs and to account for the additional time commitment of the affected Chiefs and officers. By adopting the recommended requirements, however, the CSRD will be making a significant investment in providing improved service to both the fire departments and the communities that they serve. With this in mind, fully including fire department members in discussions that set new standards can have a positive impact on morale and future retention, and improve the recruitment of future fire department members. This is a major shift in thinking, however, and needs to be approached with some care and sensitivity.

Using the currently developed position descriptions, the following matrix indicates the recommended, required and preferred training for ranks within the CSRD fire departments. Also included is the additional training that is recommended for each higher position to increase proficiency based on the relevant NFPA standards for each position.

Fire Fighter – Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (“KSA”)

Current KSA and training	Future KSA for promotion (In addition to Current)
Achievement of basic recruit level training	Minimum 3 years of experience
Work under supervision	Demonstrated leadership ability
Basic fire fighting certificate (9 modules)	
Emergency vehicle Driver/pumps and pumping	
Level 1 First aid	
HazMat Awareness	
S-100 Interface/Wildfire safety and orientation	
Live Fire 1 and 2	
Air brake certification	
Critical Incident Stress training	
Incident command system – ICS 100	

Note: completion of noted training would be a requirement for advancement.

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Lieutenant – Building on the KSA and required training for a fire fighter.

Current KSA and Training	Future KSA for promotion (In addition to Current)
3 years experience as a fire fighter	Fire ground command including strategy and tactics
Training as required for fire fighter	Knowledge of CSRD policies and O/G's
Knowledge of CSRD hiring policies	ICS – 200 (Incident Command System)
	S-215 Forestry/interface protocol
	CSRD Live Fire Train-the-trainer
	Fire Service Instructor 1 (NFPA 1041)
	Introductory supervisory skills training

Captain – building on the KSA and training for Lieutenant

Current KSA and Training	Future KSA for promotion (In addition to Current)
Completed training as a lieutenant	Ability to evaluate fire fighters
Demonstrated competence as a lieutenant	Ability to develop and oversee training
3 years experience as a fire fighter	Ability to develop and revise policy/OG's

Incident Safety Officer – building on KSA and training for Lieutenant

Current KSA and Training	Future KSA for promotion (In addition to Current)
Demonstrated competence as Lieutenant	Ability to assess fire ground hazards
Completed training as a Lieutenant	Understanding of risk and risk assessment including OHS.
3 years experience as a fire fighter	Incident Safety Officer (NFPA 1521)

Training Officer – building on KSA and training for Lieutenant

Current KSA and Training	Future KSA for promotion (In addition to Current)
Demonstrated competence as Lieutenant	Ability to develop training programs
Completed training as a Lieutenant	Ability to maintain training records
3 years experience as a fire fighter	Training Officer 2 (NFPA 1041)

Deputy Fire Chief – Building on KSA and training for Captain

Current KSA and Training	Future KSA for promotion (In addition to Current)
Minimum 5 years on a CSRD department	Completion of a fire officer training program based on NFPA 1021 including 10 topics noted above.
Completion of training as captain	Emergency Scene Management (F-120)
Maintain internal/external relationships	Media relations training
Ability to represent CSRD and fire department to public and to media	
Understanding of CSRD policies	

Fire Chief – building on KSA and training for deputy fire chief

Current KSA and Training	Future KSA for promotion (In addition to Current)
Minimum 8 years with a CSRD FD.	Emergency Scene Management (F-160)
	Knowledge of CSRD policies including finances, purchasing, HR, and record management.

The matrices set out above provide a starting place for developing an agreed set of proficiency standards for the CSRD fire service. From this base, the Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Fire Chiefs and officers, should be able to develop widely accepted, standard proficiency criteria for officers' and Chiefs' positions.

10.3.1.Recommendation 10

That a standardized officer qualification and training program based on the suggested topic areas be designed within the CSRD to create a “succession plan” for fire officers and prepare members for future chief officer positions.

10.3.2.Recommendation 11

The Co-ordinator, using the criteria provided as a guide, enter into discussions with the fire chiefs and officers to establish a standard set of proficiencies for each rank within the fire department from fire fighter to fire chief. These standards

are to include measurable factors that recognize comparable experience, and include transitional provisions (grand-parenting) for existing officers and chiefs.

10.4. Remuneration for Fire Chiefs

During the meeting with the Fire Chiefs and officers there was a general discussion on remuneration. Many present indicated that they did not volunteer because of the “pay” nor was it likely that amounts offered would ever be sufficient to be a compelling inducement. That being said, it was also noted that volunteers should not be out of pocket as a result of their volunteer work or training with the department. Any standardized remuneration system must be designed to ensure that their costs are reasonably covered.⁵⁵ At present, the remuneration for a Fire Chief in the CSRD ranges from a low of \$750 per year to a high of \$6,000 per year. There are currently no guidelines establishing a basis for this remuneration.

When considering remuneration, regardless of the position, reference is usually made to a number of principal issues, including:

- Level of responsibility;
- Required qualifications;
- Required time commitment (training, responses, and other duties); and
- Level of authority.

Salary (and other) comparisons with career departments are clearly not appropriate. That being said, the benchmarking suggested that other regional districts also struggle with the issue of how to determine remuneration levels for their Fire Chiefs, officers and volunteer firefighters. From our review, it did not appear that any of the benchmarked regions had established objective standards for determining pay levels. The following pay ranges (for all volunteers) were identified during the review:

- Department 1 - All volunteers receive a stipend ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per year plus two socials which are held for volunteers and their families.

⁵⁵ The same, of course, can be said about other officers and volunteer fire fighters. The general principles enunciated here regarding establishing the baseline for determining remuneration for a Fire Chief should be applied to the other officer and volunteer fire fighters.

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- Department 2 - Donations to Fire Fighter fund (to be spent as each individual department determines is appropriate) range from \$500 to \$14,000 per year per fire fighter; fire chief/officers receive up to \$4,000/year each.
- Department 3 - District chief (highest position) - \$2,800/year, Assistant Chiefs - \$1,000/year in addition to \$10/hour that all members receive.
- Department 4 - Fire Chief - up to \$350/ mo (\$4,200/year); Deputy Chief – to \$100/ month; Assistant Chief to \$50/month.; Training Officer to \$100/ mo; Fire Fighters \$10/practice +\$10/hr for call-out, plus socials.

In addition to the regional district fire services that were included within the benchmarking project, it has been learned that the Sechelt Fire Department⁵⁶ has developed a unique remuneration concept that has met the interests of its volunteer members. Like many of the CSR District Fire Chiefs and fire department members, the Sechelt volunteers are not interested in making money from being fire fighters, however they did not wish to be 'out-of-pocket' for performing this community service and wanted a system which was designed to encourage participation in training.

They have established a system whereby fire fighters are reimbursed as follows:

- \$30.00 for each Wednesday practice night attended⁵⁷,
- \$75.00 for each weekend day or part, for training (if the training program starts on a Friday evening, they are paid \$35 for the evening portion of the program),
- \$150.00 for each week-day taken for training, and
- The direct cost of the training, plus, where the training is out of town, mileage, reasonable expenses and a per diem for food.

In return, Sechelt volunteers are not reimbursed for responding to emergencies within their community. This takes the financial incentive away from responding to emergencies and provides a reasonable assurance that all members are adequately trained. The Sechelt Chief feels that this approach has helped focus attention on training and has consequently led to better fire ground performance, which in turn, reinforces the understanding by the members that good training is essential. He also believes that it

⁵⁶ The Sechelt Fire Department is a composite force with 40 volunteer members. It is operated as an improvement district, covering both the District of Sechelt and Sechelt Indian Band territory, with a total permanent population/tax base of some 11,000 people.

⁵⁷ This is expected to be reviewed in the upcoming budget planning.

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has helped the department with its long term retention of volunteers. At present, all volunteers in Sechelt are trained at least to NFPA Fire Fighter 1.⁵⁸ Within this scenario it must be noted that there are three fully paid fire officers and an administrative assistant, who collectively handle the administrative activities of the department.

During the facilitated meeting with the Fire Chiefs and officers, principles were identified that they felt should be considered if a remuneration scale is to be established across the region:

1. Level of training and qualification required or recommended for the position.
2. Tenure/experience of the individual
3. Average activity within the Fire Suppression Area
4. Size of department/number of members supervised

The present range of remuneration is not strongly linked to the factors noted above. This is not surprising, given the ad hoc approach that has been taken to establishing the pay levels and the fact that the volunteer Fire Chiefs or officers were very much of the view that they had not taken on their positions for the pay. Nevertheless, we believe that a pay system which fairly takes into account the responsibilities and time commitment will be of overall benefit to the CSRD fire services. The following are two scenarios that could form the basis for discussions with the fire departments on the issue of establishing a consistent basis for remuneration.

Scenario # 1

Using the top paid chief within the CSRD as the benchmark, apply a percentage to each of the principal factors broken down as follows:

- Required proficiencies (technical training) = 25%
- Recommended proficiencies (Leadership/administration training) = 15%
- Tenure – minimum years of service/experience = 10%
- Size of Department – members supervised = 25%
- Activity of department (average number of emergency responses) = 25%

⁵⁸ Results of interview with Chief Bill Higgs, Sechelt Fire Department, conducted on 20 August 2008.

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To be workable, several assumptions may have to be made, including:

- the notion that the highest paid chief will have achieved the level of training that meets both required and recommended levels;
- some decision-making must be exercised in separating the size of departments and activity level,
- in applying a system of this nature that the recommendation on enhancing management/leadership training for fire chiefs also has to be implemented;
- this process may require a grand-parenting period to allow the 'recommended' training to be clearly identified and available to those seeking advancement or currently in the position and awaiting reimbursement review; and
- there is a need for some latitude built into the steps that would allow for an increase or decrease, i.e., in responses, without suffering a reduction in reimbursement.

Scenario # 2

A second possibility is to establish a remuneration schedule covering all of the officers, based on a percentage of the Chief's remuneration, and reflecting increasing responsibility (and training). The aim would be to encourage individuals to aspire to more senior ranks within the departments (recognizing, of course, that compensation is only a small part of the equation in volunteer forces). This system would help address the issue of requiring a greater time and training commitment from the officers.

Rank	Training/proficiencies	\$\$ / %⁵⁹	Other
Fire fighter	Per proposal above	Per-call, e.g., \$12.50/call/practice (but see comments below on Sechelt model)	Mileage and tuition
Lieutenant	Per proposal above	\$900 (15% of Chief) plus callout/practice	Mileage and tuition

⁵⁹ Percentages are used as for illustration only and should not be considered as binding on final decisions.

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Rank	Training/proficiencies	\$\$ / %⁵⁹	Other
Captain/TO/ISO	Per proposal above	\$2,100 (35% of Chief) plus callout/practice	Mileage and tuition
Deputy Chief	Per proposal above	\$4,200 (70% of Chief) Plus callout/practice	Mileage and tuition
Fire Chief	Per proposal above	\$6,000 (100%) Plus callout/practice	Mileage and tuition

The above criteria provide a starting point for discussion, and can be refined through consultation with the Fire Chiefs, officers, and others.

In studying the remuneration spread that exists amongst the 13 fire departments, it is suggested that, if either of these systems are used, a two or three category system of assessing departments be created - e.g., under 2,500 population, 2,500 to 4,000 population, over 4,000 -- in order to recognize the general prerequisite that has been established for all ranks within the department. A similar approach could be used to set pay levels for fire fighters and officers.⁶⁰

It is further suggested that the CSRD consider switching from a “pay per call out” to “pay for training” using a per-day rate for training similar to the Sechelt model. This would help encourage members to attend training in general, and possibly fire officer training as well to prepare themselves for future advancement. (It should be noted that this would not change any arrangements currently in place for remuneration of fire fighters by the Ministry of Forests or other agencies in the event of a major wildfire or similar event, where local resources are being called upon by the province.)

Once a reasonable and equitable method of reimbursement is determined, annual increases in rates for fire department members could be linked to salary increases for staff within the CSRD, as is done in one of the benchmarked regional districts. Reimbursement for personal vehicle use should be handled as a separate issue and should be consistent with CSRD staff allowances and conditions of use.

⁶⁰ The Consultants believe that a similar exercise should be conducted with all of the fire fighters.

10.4.1.Recommendation 12

That the Co-ordinator, using the criteria provided above as discussion points, enter into consultations with Fire Chiefs and officers to establish a system of equitable and consistent remuneration of fire department members across the region.

10.5. *Record Management System*

In principle, a fire service Record Management System (“RMS”) is an integrated software system that will allow a fire department to manage its people, assets and properties. In British Columbia there are at least three vendor software solutions in use, which provide varying degrees of complexity and integration with other systems. These RMS’s are increasingly being offered as hosted systems shared with multiple users, each with their data protected by work-spacing. The reasons for adopting a shared or hosted solution include greater cost efficiency as well as consistency in terms of the format for reporting and management. In addition, hosted systems are increasingly seen as ways in which a sophisticated software solution can be used by small and medium size fire departments without their having to actually own and operate the system.

Within a Fire RMS there are usually a number of inter-linked modules that will fully support the management of the contemporary fire service. These modules will include those which manage:

1. People:
 - a. Skills
 - b. Training
 - c. Certification
 - d. Recruitment
 - e. Public Education
 - f. Personnel
 - g. Rostering
2. Buildings
 - a. Properties
 - b. Inspections
 - c. Hazards

- d. Permits
3. Events
 - a. Incident reports, which include:
 - i. Fire reports
 - ii. Patient care reports
 - iii. Other response reports
 - b. Investigations of all fires with property damage or where there is death or injury
 - c. Legislative reporting requirements of all fires with property damage, injury or death including an electronic interface to provide incident data to the Office of the Fire Commissioner
 4. Assets
 - a. Equipment tracking
 - b. Preventive maintenance
 - c. Inventory control

All of these modules are inter-linked to prevent multiple separate entries as well as to eliminate the inevitable data divergence that occurs when multiple databases are utilized.

A Fire RMS will provide an integrated approach to fire department management replacing the various stand alone electronic and paper-based systems for tracking inspections, assets, as well as fire fighter skills and certifications. This is particularly important with the increased focus on standards of training and certification and the requirement to have demonstrated proof of their completion.

A fire RMS is often also a 'hub' system that may also have a series of high-level relationships or interfaces by which it will do the following:

- Receive all dispatch information from the CAD system and use this to produce an incident report that will be further edited by various fire personnel. This report will become a permanent legal record of the incident and will be reported to the British Columbia Fire Commissioner as required by legislation for fires where there is property damage, injury or death as a result of the fire incident.

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- Receive, process and manage relevant municipal information such as hydrant status, property use classifications, permitted usage and others, to support overall fire department management.
- Receive, process and manage information from other external databases as defined by an approved interface specification document. The goal, as in item 2, will be to ensure that appropriate information is provided to fire service personnel without the necessity of having this information entered multiple times in various systems.

The proposals in this report contemplate a significant uploading of administrative responsibilities to the CSRD and the provision of support to the fire departments to enable them better to manage their workloads. Two of the central aims, moreover, are to improve the level of oversight and control, and to improve the ability of the region to manage its risks. A centralized RMS would make achieving these goals significantly easier. It also would enable the construction of a fire inspection database and pre-planning database that would enhance both fire suppression and fire inspection services.

10.5.1.Recommendation 13

That the CSRD conduct a review of its fire RMS needs, and seek an appropriate and cost-effective solution to providing a centralized system of records management.

11. Closing Remarks and Summary List of Conclusions

11.1. Closing Remarks

The review of the CSRD Fire Services was conducted over a period of approximately 6 months by a team of consultants with extensive backgrounds in fire suppression, training, governance and organizational analysis. The process included a full review of the administrative structure, organization and governance systems with a representative group of stakeholders from the CSRD, including the FSCs, Fire Chiefs and officers and relevant CSRD staff. This review was supplemented by a survey of comparable benchmark systems in British Columbia and one from Alberta.

The review clearly shows that the volunteers and staff who form the backbone of the fire protection system have a strong commitment to delivering a safe, effective and professional fire service. Overall, the CSRD has initiated some important steps towards centralizing a number of administrative functions of the fire service, while making a concerted effort to invest in necessary capital equipment upgrades and improved training.

Managing the decentralized structure, however, which is over 30 years old, is becoming an increasing challenge. The changes in the standards and requirements for the fire services are rapidly evolving, and external agencies which regulate these services are demanding ever greater attention to process, administration and record keeping. The costs of dealing with this growing regulatory burden, while also managing the necessary capital and training investments, is significantly stressing the financial bases of a number of the Fire Suppression Areas.

In addition, as development and growth occurs in the CSRD, the need to implement some level of public building inspection and fire education in order to better manage potential fire risks is becoming more pressing.

There are a “baker’s dozen” of recommendations made in this report. A number of them are extremely far-reaching, and involve recasting both the structure of the service and the underlying tax base. Recommendations have also been made to implement a fire

inspection process, which the Consultants believe will become ever more important with the increasing number of high density developments in the major tourist destinations. The other recommendations are designed to support these suggested innovations, or to address specific issues identified in the scope of work.

The collective aim of these recommendations is to establish a solid base for the delivery of fire services in the CSRD, one which is professional, effective, affordable and scalable, while improving the risk management profile of these operations. We believe that if the CSRD implemented these recommendations, it would put the region at the forefront for the delivery of regional fire services.

In conclusion it must be noted that the review team was at all times shown the greatest possible level of courtesy and respect by the CSRD staff and the dedicated group of volunteers who deliver fire services to the region.

11.2. Summary List of Conclusions

The following is a summary list of the recommendations made in this report. It should be noted that the excerpts below need to be reviewed along with the detailed comments and explanations that have been provided in order to be fully understood.

1. Enhance the office and role of the Fire Suppression Co-ordinator.
2. Revise the structure and role of the Fire Suppression Committees.
3. Update the Operational Criteria Bylaw (BL 5286) for regional volunteer fire departments.
4. Identify specific, fundamental administrative tasks currently handled by volunteers in the Fire Department and either:
 - a. Download the task to the CSRD; or
 - b. Provide systems or assistance that will reduce the burden on fire departments and facilitate CSRD oversight and review.
5. The Fire Suppression Areas should be merged into a single service area with a single budget.
6. The CSRD should implement and staff a program of fire prevention, fire inspection and related LAFC duties, including administration of the Fire Services Act and enforcement of the BC Fire Code.

7. The staff conducting fire prevention and safety inspections be trained to a minimum NFPA Fire Inspector 1 level or equivalent.
8. The CSRD should adopt bylaws and procedures to enforce the BC Building Code throughout the region.
9. The CSRD should establish a coordinated public fire safety education program that is available to all fire departments throughout the region. The coordinator of the program should be given adequate training and orientation to understand the resources that are available and how to administer this program. This could be an integral part of the duties assigned to the fire prevention inspector and could be added to the mandate for the new "Fire Services Advisory Committee", who would assist the fire prevention inspector in this regard.
10. That a standardized officer qualification and training program based on the suggested topic areas be designed within the CSRD to create a "succession plan" for fire officers and prepare members for future chief officer positions.
11. The Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Fire Chiefs, develop standard proficiency criteria to determine the eligibility of members for positions as officers or chiefs. These standards are to include provisions to measure and recognize comparable experience, and include transitional provisions for existing officers and chiefs.
12. The Co-ordinator, using the criteria provided in this Report as discussion points, enter into consultations with Fire Chiefs and officers to establish a system of equitable and consistent remuneration of fire department members across the region.
13. The CSRD should conduct a review of its fire RMS needs, and seek an appropriate and cost-effective solution to providing a centralized system of records management.

11.3. *Implementation*

The recommendations in this report are far-reaching. A system is being proposed which is intended to provide a multi-decadal approach to managing fire services within the CSRD. As already indicated, managing change on this scale can prove significantly challenging, and it is critical throughout the process to ensure that affected parties are consulted. Strong communication lines relating to the proposed changes must be established and maintained throughout the process.

Assuming that all of the above recommendations are accepted for implementation by the CSRD Board, we would recommend the following in relation to implementation:

1. Review with the province whether funding will be available to deal with the proposed changes (including covering the costs of consultation, implementation and any necessary infrastructure improvements).
2. Undertake further consultation with the Fire Suppression Committees to explain the proposed changes, lay out a time table for the change and further refine the concepts surrounding the new Fire Services Advisory Committee.
3. Undertake further consultation with the Fire Chiefs, to review and refine:
 - a. Proposed changes to the role of the Co-ordinator;
 - b. The changes to the role of the Fire Suppression Committees;
 - c. The administrative functions that need to be downloaded from the individual departments to the CSRD and what reporting and other changes are needed to ensure appropriate centralized oversight of fire service operations;
 - d. The process by which standardized proficiency criteria for Fire Chiefs and officers will be implemented (including refining those criteria and establishing a time line for achieving them);
 - e. The development of a coordinated fire safety education program,
 - f. Initiate a project to select an appropriate RMS with the assistance and input of the Fire Chiefs; and
 - g. The process by which an equitable and consistent remuneration of fire department members will be achieved across the CSRD.
4. Based on the administrative work to be downloaded to the CSRD, hire further administrative support reporting to the Co-ordinator, to assist the individual departments with this work. As part of this effort, each fire department should be provided with a computer and internet connectivity.
5. Review with the Ministry of Community Development the appropriate or recommended approach with respect to amalgamating the Fire Suppression Areas into a single service area.
6. Draft bylaws reflecting the above input. The following bylaws will require amendment or replacement:

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- a. A bylaw replacing the existing Fire Suppression Committees with the Fire Services Advisory Committee;
 - b. A bylaw updating or replacing the Fire Services Operational Criteria bylaw. This revised bylaw would incorporate the role to be played by the Co-ordinator and provide that the CSRD has the right to establish policy regarding matters such as proficiency criteria, remuneration and similar matters; and
 - c. A bylaw (possibly subject to referendum) amalgamating the existing Fire Suppression Areas into a single service area with a common tax rate across the region.
7. Develop a bylaw, with appropriate public consultation, implementing a process for requiring building permits and enforcing the Building Code (BC) across the CSRD. Hire additional staff as required to handle these new responsibilities.
 8. Develop a bylaw, with appropriate public consultation, establishing a fire prevention / public education function and, upon implementation, hire an additional FTE reporting to the Co-ordinator to commence fire inspections based on the bylaw.
 9. Select and implement a region-wide RMS for use by the Fire Services.

12. Appendix A: Consultants' Resumes

Company Organization and Experience

Dave Mitchell & Associates Ltd. was established in 2000 and offers independent consulting services in the provision and operation of emergency communications systems as well as fire service management including training, hazardous materials response and organizational issues.

Our firm has conducted a number of master fire plans and fire services reviews as well as fire hall location studies and has also conducted a review of fire services requirements for various regional districts and municipal governments. Recently we have also conducted a number of communication centre base-line reviews to ensure compliance with current standards of service. These reviews have led to increased efficiencies, resolved governance issues and supported upgraded equipment and procedures. In addition we are participating with an increasing number of organizations as facilitators and consultants developing strategic and operational plans, organizational studies and post-implementation reviews.

Three consultants will be involved with this review: Dave Mitchell, John Vokes, and Ian MacDonald. A brief biography for each of these follows.

Dave Mitchell

Dave Mitchell retired as Division Chief, in 1998 from Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services following a career spanning 32 years. During this time he was responsible for managing the emergency call taking and dispatch for the Vancouver and Whistler Fire Departments. In 1997 he managed the transition of dispatch service for the five Fire Departments on the Sunshine Coast from an independent contractor, to Vancouver Fire/Rescue.

In 1998 Mr. Mitchell was hired by E-Comm, Emergency Communications for Southwest BC as its first Operations Manager. In this role he was a member of the founding senior management team, and was responsible for the transition of the Regional 9-1-1 Control Centre staff from the Vancouver Police Department to its current location at 3301 East Pender in June 1999. By June 2000 this included the management of approximately 200 call takers, dispatchers and team managers in addition to a ULC listed alarm monitoring service.

He left E-Comm in June 2000 to work as a consultant, and since that time has managed the development of corporate, strategic and operational plans for a number of clients. In addition he has completed a number of fire hall location studies for clients throughout the Province, provided transition management services to Vancouver Fire/Rescue as it implemented a new Computer Aided Dispatch system and is currently project manager for development of their new records management system. In 2004 Mr. Mitchell provided technical advice to the Hon. Gary Filmon as part of the Firestorm 2003 Review. In 2005, along with ICT Consult Inc. he conducted a full review of the radio system for the fire departments on the Sunshine Coast Regional District and in 2006 he conducted a similar review for the Central Okanagan Regional District.

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More recently he has conducted a master fire plan for West Vancouver in addition to managing a major communications upgrade for the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, a fire hall location study for the Fort St. John Fire Department and a fire services review for the Comox Strathcona Regional District. Along with John Vokes and Doug McRae he has recently conducted a fire services review for the Saanich Fire Department and is presently conducting a master fire plan for the North Vancouver District Fire/Rescue Department, a fire services review for the Columbia Shuswap Regional District and developing an implementation model for the new sub-regional fire department in the Howe Sound corridor, the Howe Sound East Volunteer Fire Department.

Mr. Mitchell holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Simon Fraser University in addition to a diploma from their Executive Management Development Program. He is past Chair of the Board of Directors of the Vancouver General Hospital and University of British Columbia Hospital Foundation and is a member of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO), the Fire Chiefs' Association of British Columbia (FCABC), the Canadian Association of Management Consultants (CAMC) and is a member of the Public Safety Communications Advisory Committee of Kwantlen College.

John Vokes

John Vokes has been engaged in independent fire services consulting since 2005 following a 34 year fire service career in progressively responsible positions. These positions include 17 years with the British Columbia Office of the Fire Commissioner - the last nine as Deputy Fire Commissioner, Policy and Operations, eight years as Director of the Justice Institute of BC's Fire & Safety Division, and nine years as a career fire fighter with the City of Hamilton Fire Department.

John provides technical, interpretive, and administrative advice related to interpretation of codes, standards, and legislation that affects fire safety, enforcement of fire regulations, and the development of fire training and emergency response strategies. John has assisted many local governments and organizations throughout British Columbia to establish and improve their fire protection systems. This experience has led to an in-depth understanding of fire protection systems, fire service culture, and operational needs related to fire safety that is reflected in the interpretation and advice that is offered to clients.

John is well qualified to lead fire service initiatives having earned a Master of Arts degree (RRU) in Leadership and Training, a Bachelor of General Studies degree (SFU) with a focus on Leadership in Justice and Public Safety Organizations, and a Fire Science Certificate (Mohawk College). John is also a member of the Institution of Fire Engineers (MIFireE).

In addition to an in-depth understanding of fire service and industrial emergency responder interests and having served as the Canadian co-chair of the North American Fire Training Director's Association, John brings to the table a worldview of safety and emergency response services along with a large network of resources within the provincial, national, and international fire service community.

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John has conducted a number of fire service reviews including Big White Fire Department, District of Highlands Fire Department, Bear Mountain Golf Resort Fire Response Plan, District of Peachland Fire Rescue Service, Regional District of Fraser Fort George (training center), Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen (feasibility study for administrative services and training center), City of Fort St John (training center (2 phases)). John has worked as a technical fire resource on projects with UMA Engineering, and with Dave Mitchell and Associates including reviews and assessments for the Squamish Lillooet Regional District, View Royal Fire Department, the fire innovation project for Comox Strathcona Regional District, and master fire plans for Saanich Fire Department and North Vancouver District Fire/Rescue Department.

Ian MacDonald

Ian MacDonald is a former lawyer who practiced international corporate law in Canada and the United Kingdom. Ian started as a lawyer with Davies Ward & Beck in Toronto in 1990 and worked on large corporate transactions in Canada, including the Strait Crossing Inc. project which put the financing and development agreements in place for the construction of the bridge linking Prince Edward Island with New Brunswick. He also advised extensively on other financings, shareholder agreements and corporate restructurings and corporate acquisitions. Ian became a partner in Davies Ward & Beck in 1994 and an equity partner in 1996.

After moving to England in 1998, Ian became managing partner of Arnander, Irvine & Zietman, an intellectual property/litigation firm, and had a varied practice advising clients in respect of company formation, shareholder and members' agreements, corporate financing, governance issues, and privacy matters. He also did extensive work on litigation files related to corporate fraud.

Ian retired as a lawyer in January 2004 and returned to Canada, since which time he has acted as a volunteer director on two boards, acting as the chair of the governance committee for one, and assisted various community groups in developing long term strategic and business plans. Ian has previously worked with Planetworks on the recent review of the CREST system, conducting a full governance review of that organization and with Dave Mitchell & Associates on the Comox Strathcona Regional District project. He is also working on the master fire plan for the District of North Vancouver, and providing governance advice as required for the implementation of the East Howe Sound Volunteer Fire Department.

Ian received an honours BA in history at Simon Fraser University in 1983, a masters degree in history from the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) in 1986 and an LLB from Dalhousie University in 1990.

13. Appendix B: Notes from Meeting with Fire Suppression Committees

Facilitated Meeting with Fire Suppression Committees 5 April 2008

The following questions were considered during the facilitation.

1. What are the three most important aspects of the role played by the Fire Suppression Committees? (attributions removed)

- Budget management - Revisit the items on the budget; review previous year's budget and determine succeeding year's budget. In most areas there is more of an arm's length relationship with the Chief. Liaison between taxpayer and the Fire Department. Area is heavily summer people.
- FSC reviews budget & FD wants & needs. Tries to balance wants/needs with tax impact.
- Managing finances - Accountability to CSRD - Accountability to Taxpayers.
- Role is to support the Fire Fighters. Members are drawn from the pool of taxpayers. The Committee is there to build up the department and work with the Chief. Volunteers are hard to reach. Have had some challenges recruiting fire fighters and the Fire Suppression Committee helped initiate a PR campaign to draw in more volunteers. Have successfully added to the volunteer force.
- Noted that the previous committee was dissolved because there were challenges in the relationship between the Chief and committee.
- Custodians of the property (facilities management role). They have one person appointed to handle this. Have the same problem with drawing in volunteers to work on the committee. 80% of their population is summer transient. Many of the permanent residents are over the age of 70.
- Chiefs and committees sometimes have their own "little world", and the worlds are too separate. This area has turned some of its administrative responsibilities over to CSRD. They also have changed the chief and the committee. Now working much better. Summer population doesn't care about the fire services or helping out with it. Managing that relationship is a significant challenge.
- Noted that the attitude that the fire department is "my department" or that the fire suppression committee is "my committee" sometimes creates problems.
- Can unduly politicize the process.
- Role of FS Committee is to interface with and represent the taxpayers. Obtained an insurance industry accreditation for their jurisdiction that resulted in lower fire insurance rates. Noted that obtaining this accreditation was outside the required role of the Fire Suppression Committee. It was done on a voluntary basis, however, with the cooperation of the Regional District.
- Discovered a significant gap in knowledge at the committee level in understanding the safety issues related to updating equipment/training/education. Their committee moved to close this gap. Suppression committees have an ear in the community that often is not reflected by the

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- low attendance at the Annual General Meeting. Committee has to provide a communication link between the public and the CSRD.
- Committees work more effectively if they remain democratic and open rather than “power trips” for certain individuals. Operations can often be affected by personal disputes.
 - Fire Department has been changing over by improving its image (uniforms, etc.). Fire chief keeps the committee updated as to what is going on; open communication is critical to making the committees effective. Communications with CSRD and ensuring that there is training for the fire fighters are also important.
 - Training for the fire fighters has improved significantly since the advent of the Fire Services Coordinator. Mutual aid – they are now on the “same page”.
 - Emphasizes above point on training and now feels that the fire fighters in their area are now better trained.
 - Noted that most volunteer fire fighters in their area are of a more advanced age group. Different departments have different capabilities (and therefore there must be different expectations)
 - Staff comment: Committee structure was designed 30 years ago and reflected lack of resources at the regional level at the time. Thirty years on, problems now arise with attendance, volunteer levels and commitment on the committees, demands on the Committee’s time, increasing liability etc.
 - Also noted that the demands on the fire service and the requirements for operating a fire department have changed significantly since the Committee structure was introduced - far more onerous now than previously.
 - Staff comment: Notes that one FSC invite the chief to the committee meetings to get his input. He is able to advise on the functional needs of the department and allow the budget to be developed to deal with future needs.

Facilities Management:

- Fire hall was previously a real mess. Have hired someone to do regular cleaning. However, the Fire Department itself looks after the building maintenance.
- Committee has appointed different committee members to handle the various roles, including building maintenance.
- The Committee coordinates maintenance with the Chief. Also noted that they had had some Committee members that were confrontational, but they have since retired.
- Contract out snow clearing and grounds maintenance. Volunteers (many of them fire fighters) doing the painting and many of the other maintenance tasks.
- New chief has taken the lead on fire hall maintenance and appearance; snow removal is organized by the committee.
- The fire fighters themselves maintain the hall. The Committee itself is not in control of this.
- Question raised as to who is aware of the general occupational health and safety rules and requirements that affect the Committee’s obligations in relation to hall maintenance. In general, most acknowledged that they were not aware of the specific OHS requirements.
- There was some discussion regarding occasional inspections by the Jack Blair on behalf of the Regional District.

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- Noted a recent inspection by Jack Blair. Are these regular inspections? Noted that requirement is for annual inspections.
- May need to re-issue the safety list that had been circulated by the CSRD.
- Staff comment: Recruitment issues when discussed with Chiefs/Deputy Chiefs saw it as an impediment to expect the volunteer fire fighters to do building maintenance as well.
- General consensus in the room that it was not a deterrent to recruitment and did not negatively impact retention.
- The FS Committee has contracted out the maintenance and built their budget accordingly.

2. What are the three biggest challenges for the Fire Suppression Committees?

- Meeting bylaw requirements.
- Not enough public input or support.
- Committee consists entirely of Fire fighters.
- Lack of arm's length accountability
- Terms have been exceeded. There will be no committee members if rules are strictly followed.
- Getting everyone to follow the rules. How do we get everyone on the same page? How do we get them to follow the rules? Example was a fire department member who purchased additional chains and wanted reimbursement even though it had not been approved.
- Staff comment: CSRD should be brought in if there is a dispute - noted that one of the shortcomings of the process is that committees are how heavily comprised of fire fighters because not enough people are prepared to volunteer.
- Members on Committee are often spouses of fire fighters or on Fire Department. No outsiders (public) at the meetings. Therefore lacking "public" input.
- Need to print out of the roles & responsibilities (in discussion it was noted that this has already been circulated).
- FSC members not totally sure of what the role is, so meetings are not effective.
- Challenge distinguishing between the role & responsibilities of the Fire Department and the Committee (operational versus administrative functions)
- Lack of community involvement.
- Used to be mostly Fire Fighters on the Committee; most now drawn from the general public. Difficult to get people out.
- Good relations with Fire Department.
- Challenge getting people onto the Committee and to attend at the AGM.
- Budgeting system and bill payment system could be improved.
- Public turn out/involvement disappointing
- Committee is split between fire fighters and the public.
- Transient population, so difficult to get others involved.
- Getting new members up to speed on the role of the committee and to get things done.
- Lack of interest from non fire personnel (or related individuals, such as spouses). They have tried advertising but are not getting much response.

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- Lack of finance/funding; difficulties with getting the money to cover maintain equipment. Lack of a large enough tax base due to low population.
- Noted that the Committee at an earlier point was mostly Fire Fighters; that is no longer the case.
- Getting people out to AGM; and
- Public input to the Committee. Not much interest from the public in what they are doing.
- Getting people to understand where the money comes from. Budget control is their biggest issue.
- Getting public out to the meetings/AGMs. However, only one of 6 on the committee is a fire fighter.
- Staff comment: One of the smallest fire suppression areas has some tax base challenges.
- Managed to get 38 people out to last AGM. Committee meets monthly except during the summer. Prior to 3 ½ years ago, the Committee was something of a “closed club”. That has now changed and there has been a changeover in Committee members. Committee is now entirely comprised of public members (not fire fighters)
- Getting people out to meetings - in vacation land/farm areas, harder to get people out than in the more urban areas.
- Staff challenge: Educating committee members on the actual needs of the Fire Department (helping the committees understand what is actually required to operate a fire department properly and safely – noted in particular that the cost of equipment was often an issue until it was understood the different specifications / requirements necessary to meet the fire department’s needs).

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the operation of the Fire Suppression Committees?

Note: this can include everything from minor changes to the Committees’ functions, to a complete change in the way the fire services are managed across the region.

- Bylaw 5285 should be changed to reflect reality of small community FD’s. Or, institute a complete change to the way fire services are managed and administered. Having to get volunteer members to take on the role is a major challenge.
- More education of the public is needed, particularly regarding interface issues.
- CSRD should take more responsibility in getting the message out regarding the need for both volunteers Fire Fighters and volunteers for the Fire Suppression Committees.
- Communicating budget expenditure requirements from the CSRD. Trade off between liability and occasional need to require a fire suppression committee to make a budget expenditure.
- Noted that there was almost no communication with other Committees. Suggested sharing meeting minutes [or finding other means of communicating on a regular basis].
- Need to get more information out to the community to encourage volunteers. Likes the idea of an exchange of ideas with other committees.
- May need to amalgamate their suppression area

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- Administrative factors would drive the issue.
- Download some of the administrative responsibilities and roles would be helpful.
- Committees need training for their chairs, treasurers (officers) so that they properly understand their roles and responsibilities. Training regard both substance (what are you responsible for) and form (how to run a meeting) are needed.
- Concern expressed that local input could be lost if you go to a single "fire suppression committee". Suggested amalgamating the three north Shuswap departments and committees. She felt that their Committee & department were quite open to that idea.
- Feel that their department and Committee were open to that concept (amalgamation)
- Amalgamation would be advantageous to them;
- Fire Suppression Committee numbers should be limited to 7 (rather than 9).

- Communications need to be improved with other Committees and with the Regional District; training is needed for committee members. The CSRD should work with committees to standardize training for members and help them understand the roles they play.
- Can't stay the way we are. Amalgamation is likely the way to go. Thinks it would work. Beneficial to everyone in the long run.
- Suggests total amalgamation of all committees; also need to look at amalgamating contiguous fire suppression areas.
- There should be an upload to the CSRD of as many administrative functions as possible. However, notes that the local community may be concerned if control is lost over expenditures. If you take away all the decision making from local committee, problems may arise. Stressed the need for local taxpayer input into the process (and protection of the local taxpayer's interests), which is currently done through or by the Committee.
- Notes the need for better overall communication of issues between departments. As CSRD addresses specific issues with a particular department or Committee, each hall should be informed about what is going on. Ability to see what other departments and Committees are doing. More sharing of issues, challenges and solutions.
- Suggests an 'annual' meeting of suppression committees to exchange ideas, identify issues etc.
- Communication and education are the two biggest issues. No one seems aware of what the Fire Suppression committee is. Would not want to lose the local community input to the process. Need local representation.
- Develop better media relations and profile. Seek to make the fire departments Page 1 news. Better PR to help attract volunteers, improve community awareness and raise the departments' profile.
- Develop better consistency between committees and better consistency across the region. Same rules for everyone, followed in the same way.
- Communication & education issues.
- Meetings of suppression committees. How would amalgamation work given the distances? Have AGM's on the same night.
- Need more information and communication from CSRD to Fire Suppression Committees.

- Wouldn't support amalgamation. Concerned about impact on taxes (would it cost the ratepayers more money?). Concerned about possible operational issues, some of which were discussed in a general way.
- Staff comment: Originally, Fire Suppression Areas depended very heavily on committees to control the Fire Departments. Now have 13 separate Fire Departments, each with a separate committee. Growth and expansion has made the original structure difficult to manage and oversee. Noted the growing complexity of operating fire services, and the possible downside if administrative issues are not properly handled.

4. What is the current role of the (1) Regional District and (2) the Fire Services Coordinator in providing or supporting fire suppression services?

- General note: Based on the discussion, it was clear that much of the Regional District's role in supporting fire suppression services was linked to the role played by Jack Blair. The other major support that was discussed was help with developing the annual and five year budgets.
- Hiring of Jack Blair as Fire Services Coordinator has been good for fire services in the region.
- Ask the CSRD/FS Coordinator for help and they provide it. Budgeting help is provided. Up to the committees to ask for help.
- More help pre-planning for major incidents (including interface fire situations) (whether from CSRD or Fire Services Coordinator). Discussion around the "Community Wildfire Plan" under Filmon Report and Emergency preparedness committee meeting re: Wildfire planning.
- Notes that the CSRD Fire Fighters are structural not interface fire fighters (under the establishment bylaw).
- Fire Services Coordinator has been a major asset. Get help from CSRD, but could be improved with some refinement. For example, need some advance notice of what is left over at year end to catch up on small expenditures (e.g., could have improved the kitchen with left over funds, rather than have them disappear into reserves).
- Better communication with CSRD as to the final (agreed) form of budget is needed, as they submit their budgets but don't always see the final version before it is approved.
- Staffing should be increased to enhance the functions / role played by the Fire Services Coordinator.
- CSRD should provide legal and financial management assistance.
- CSRD should coordinate major purchases (continuing the existing practice).
- Fire Suppression Committee is a good resource for coordinating major purchases.

5. What three (3) changes could the Regional District make to improve the operation of fire suppression services across the region?

- Ensure that there is consistency in policies and that the regional district follows its own rules, particularly regarding purchase orders. Clarity as to policy and approach on financial matters would be helpful.
- Money is there but not being spent. [Some discussion ensued regarding money being moved to reserves at year end and committees needing more information regarding available surpluses.]

- Keeping the Committees informed as to insurance coverage for fire fighters.
- CSRD – should introduce training / workshops for members of the fire suppression committees to help them understand their roles and responsibilities.

Election/voting for Fire Chief: No substantive comments on this issue.

6. What changes could be made to the role of Fire Services Coordinator to improve the operation of fire suppression services across the region?

Should there be an educational role played by the CSRD?

- Need to educate the public to deal with potential fire hazards, particularly where there is a significant risk (e.g., build up of dead trees from bug kill on an individual's property). Suggested a once a year town meeting to help educate the public as to fire issues.
- Fire Education needs to be coordinated by CSRD.
- Staff comment: Higher and new levels of service will require additional taxes to meet additional costs.
- Shouldn't public education be done on a provincial level? [Discussion ensued regarding the province's role in supporting fire suppression services. Noted that most of the responsibility falls on municipalities or regional districts.]

7. What other changes should be considered for the fire suppression services offered by the Regional District? Some examples of issues which may need to be considered include:

a. Administration issues,

- Noted that routine bill payments are now handled by CSRD (hydro, gas, phone etc.)
- Bills are handled between the Chair and Treasurer, not at meetings. Only meet every couple of months or so.
- [Some general discussion of uploading some administrative responsibilities to the CSRD. Also, some discussion of the help that is provided in developing budgets and similar matters.]

b. Public relations issues,

- Public awareness of burning grass land, brush, etc.
- Illegal Campers/fires – need better control
- Fire bans in effect – signs to be posted
- Noted that Fire Chiefs have authority to extinguish any illegal burn and issue a citation.
- Without a regional district bylaw, however, controlling the burning, the burn itself would not be illegal.

c. Fire Suppression Area boundaries and unprotected areas,

- No significant concern here. If people aren't prepared to pay to receive services, then they can't expect to receive services.

d. The range of services being offered,

- Interface/forest fire – noted that in one case the local department had put out the fire before forestry got there.
- Lack of a rescue truck for highway / MVAs. Current situation is not working well. Staff comment: CSRD has no mandate at this time to provide this service. Have focussed on what is currently permitted by bylaw, which does not include highway rescue. This is currently a provincial responsibility, and most of the issues arise with non-residents. If the Regional District takes on the role through the fire services, the costs will have to be directly borne by the local tax payers. There are concerns about the impact these call outs (which would be much more frequent) would have on the volunteer fire fighters.
- Shouldn't FD be called out to MVA's to deal with potential fire risk?
- Staff comment: this is indeed the case if such an issue arises. He also discussed how equipment is dispatched (including circumstances where the FD will be dispatched to motor vehicle accidents).

e. Cost issues / tax issues,

- The CSRD should look at providing low interest loans to cover major capital equipment expenditures.
- Some concerns were expressed that amalgamation may lead to tax rate increases for some districts.

f. Staffing concerns,

- Noted that recruiting is an issue for both the fire department and the Committee.
- Currently, the department's numbers range from 15 -18. Turn over and replacement are major issues.
- Staff comment: Noted that volunteer fire fighter recruitment fluctuates significantly. This fluctuation makes it tough to manage recruitment effectively. Some areas are feeling the effects more significantly than others, i.e., three North Shuswap departments.
- General view was that recruitment elsewhere was holding steady.
- Noted that the insurance coverage provided some attractive benefits. And that skill development may help attract younger recruits.
- Daytime coverage: mid-day / mid week call outs in the North Shuswap area were problematic – major potential coverage problem.
- Concern about volunteer fire fighter's safety - if there are insufficient people responding to calls, or if the equipment or training are inadequate.
- If we could advertise "best equipment, best training" and "not out of pocket", it may make volunteering more attractive.
- Honoraria need to be standardized across the region and should be sufficient to attract recruits.

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- General discussion re: recognition of Volunteer FF's: many things that can be done to recognize contributions, from various events, plus long service medals.

g. Training:

- It would be helpful to have a trainer available to local fire departments for in house training.
- It would be cheaper to have a trainer travel to various areas than move their entire crew to Salmon Arm for training.

h. Mutual aid issues (interoperability, Operational Guidelines, communications, identification, training issues)

- Mutual aid agreements need to be clarified. Circumstances requiring stand-by when other crews have been called out to M.V.A.s require clarification.
- Communication should improve between CSRD and Fire Suppression; and between Fire Suppression Committees and FD.
- New Fire Suppression Committee members require training/education.
- Need more information about the roles and responsibilities of the Fire Suppression Committee.
- Education and communication between CSRD and FSC are the major concerns.
- Should be more dialogue between suppression committees.
- Wants better information on how the CSRD sees the overall operation working, so the Committees can tailor their roles appropriately.
- Annual/semi-annual meeting of all Fire Suppression Committees.
- Improved communications.

Day-end summary

- This meeting was highly informative.
- Excellent day. Priority is communication.
- It is the responsibility of the Committee members to initiate communications with CSRD. Be proactive.
- Ditto. And priority of bringing out more volunteers.
- Uploading of treasurer's function and related administrative duties to the CSRD.
- Ditto. Then reduce committee to 5.
- Great benefit if we shared issues and challenges amongst the committees.
- Need to push public education.
- Committees need to meet together more and share information and approaches.
- Found the session informative; CSRD should develop a more effective approach with the local media.
- Operational guidelines for the committees to standardize approaches and operations by committees.

14. Appendix C: Notes from Meeting with Fire Chiefs/officers

Meeting held 12 April 2008 (all day)

The following are the notes taken at the facilitated meeting with the Fire Chiefs at the facilitated meeting held on 12 April 2008. (attributions have been removed)

1. **What are the three (3) most important issues that we need to discuss related to the need to change?**
 - Timelines - What is the timing and what happens after the report is delivered? As change is implemented, will it be reviewed and revised based on effectiveness?
 - Cost of services being delivered. Critical issue to the taxpayer.
 - Training - as the community grows its needs will change (different building heights, exposures etc.). Increasing demands on personnel.
 - Development – will the Hummingbird development be controlled by CSRD? Is each resident taxed individually?
 - Need for consultation with Fire Departments regarding proposed developments. Example: Carmel Bay – don't stand a chance of fighting a fire in there (only 5 ft. between buildings, cedar construction roofs; no hydrants, no reservoirs).
 - Staff comment: notes that this issue is tied into the need for building inspection and approval. Currently, it is difficult even for the Regional District to know what is going on.
 - This gives rise to two issues:
 - Communications between the Regional District & Fire Departments over projected developments.
 - The lack of a building permit/inspection process.
 - What is the role of the Regional District in controlling development?
 - Noted in many areas, there is no zoning and therefore the CSRD has no control.
 - In the area that has building inspections there was no communications from or consultation with the CSRD to discuss the needs of the fire service in relation to water systems, new developments, ability to respond/protect etc.
 - Noted that some communications with developers is occurring on a local basis – where the developers are taking it upon themselves to contact the local fire service and make sure that their road widths, access points etc., are sufficient - but there needs to be a better and more coherent consultation process with the CSRD.
 - Minimum requirement for subdivision should include a consideration of fire services (hydrants/water supply, turn-arounds and access).
 - Staff comment: noted that work was currently being undertaken by revising the subdivision and development servicing bylaw.
 - There is a need to 'ride herd' on the contractors, because the variance process often takes the plans substantially away from what initially approved (example of Hummingbird which has gone from one to two storey buildings).

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- Demonstrated need for consultation between the CSRD and the fire services was stressed (so, before variances need to be reviewed for potential impact on the effective delivery of fire services).
- Fire hydrant standards at the province level? There are standards, but they aren't provincial. These rules are in place but are being updated.
- Will there be standards for commercial development as well? Major industrial or commercial developments impact the fire service and produce the same need for a comprehensive approach to development that integrates the fire services' requirements.
- This discussion drive the need for proper remuneration for time spent. Work load has increased significantly. Examples: community meetings, organizing training (multi-storey structure fires require more intense training); level of training required etc.
- Potential increase in service demands: for example, highway and lake rescue. What is coming? Taxpayers are surprised to find that there is no road rescue. For wildfires – the initial response already is now the local Fire Department.
- Expansion of responses now include Hazmat situations (including drug houses, etc.) and associated training adds to the financial and time burdens for volunteers.
- Administration and accountability is increasing.
- Difficult to handle the administrative burden. Risks are increased if records are not maintained.
- Challenging in a volunteer organization to ensure that everything has been recorded (and been recorded correctly).
- Need to review the mandate of the Fire Services as well. Currently, fire suppression is the only mandate for the departments. The departments are not set up for or funded to handle a wider mandate, so if service areas are expanded, this will need to be taken into consideration.
- Communication issues – radios don't work with each other or with radios used by other departments (mutual aid scenarios). Many dead zones.
- Communication dead spots with dispatch. Funding is a major issue for White Lake. There is no extra money for the Fire Department – White Lake is already maxed out on taxes because the tax base is so small.
- Staff comment: Noted that there is a separate 911 communication review currently underway.
- Seasonal growth issues: Note that there is a significant challenge for some areas which have to deal with enormous population swings. They have an "Official" population 4,100; but their summer population is 12,000+. Much of the planning is based on full time population of 4,100, as is the funding. A further example involved the north side of the lake, where the swing is even greater. The north shore evacuation plan during the 2003 fires emanated from the Fire Commissioner's office, were predicated on a population of 3,100 (representing the number of full time residents); they didn't realize that the summer population was as much as ten times larger (some 30,000+).
- Full time residents on north shore now are about 3,500. Summer population is as much as 40,000.
- Impact of transient population includes: bonfires, campfires, fireworks, restricted access and egress (traffic congestion; road capacity limits are challenged); calls on cell phones from summer transients often do not know where they are calling from (identifying locations for tourists).

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- The north shore is not designed to handle the traffic load. Only one way in or out.
- Railways – access for fire fighting is very restricted. Mandated to look after the railways, but getting to the fire can be a significant challenge. [There was then some discussion as to whether or not the railways were contributing to the fire suppression budgets of the areas through which they passed. It was thought that there might be a grant in lieu of taxes, but no one was certain.]
- Noted that more than one area has only one access road. Some Forest Service road access, but no signs showing the local population how to access them for escape purposes, if that became necessary.
- Noted that there was a provincial parks may be outside of fire protection boundaries but all parks have park wardens located throughout CSRD.
- Developments where people are not permanent residents - “empty house” syndrome, where development is occurring, the fire department may not be aware that the house has been built and it is not regularly occupied.
- Many new houses have fire and intruder alarms resulting in false alarms. Handling these false alarms is time consuming, hard on the volunteers and difficult for the department to manage.
- There is a need to implement a building permit and inspection process to get a handle on where houses/developments are being built. Houses currently are being built in areas that the Fire Department don’t know about.
- Consider a bylaw relating to false alarms.

2. What are the three (3) biggest challenges facing your fire department over the next five years?

- Recruitment and retention. It is already a problem and will increase over time (particularly as demands grow or services are extended).
- Growing summer population – more houses built, but fewer people living there permanently. Population swings make it difficult to staff and plan.
- Aging population. More difficult to obtain sufficient able-bodied recruits.

- Upgrading of equipment given the department’s financial constraints. Noted that they have 3 SCBA’s that can’t be used; all SCBA’s have steel tanks, etc.
- Communication issues and equipment require renewal regardless of financial constraints.
- The impact of anticipated growth and expansion in the area – increases in population, development and consequent demands on the department. Traffic flow and congestion is also becoming an increasing concern and potential constraint on access (for the department) and egress (for a population that may need to be evacuated).
- Need a CSRD-wide plan to ensure all Fire Departments have the equipment that they need to fight a fire safely. It is essential that the CSRD ensures that all departments are properly equipped. The Fire Service is the only volunteer organization where people are regularly asked to put their lives on the line. They shouldn’t be asked to do that with substandard or inadequate equipment (or training).
- Need a process in place that specifies minimum equipment standard for each FD based on mandate and need.
- Suggestion to aggregate the budgets of all 13 FD’s (and their respective tax bases) and create a single budget. The overall effect on the taxpayers would likely be relatively small (some would benefit, some would lose), but that from

a safety standpoint, it was the only economically feasible way to deal with the issues facing a number of the smaller departments.

[Ed. Note: Concern and comment about properly equipping all of the departments and suggestion of a unified budget, was well received in the room.]

- Staff comment: staff have examined tax rates for potentially amalgamating the budgets of a number of the departments around Shuswap Lake. The financial impact of such a consolidation on Shuswap was relatively small (several cents on the existing mil rate); the savings for White Lake, however, were huge.
- The biggest issues are (1) to assess what we have now (equipment), and determine what population expansion anticipated and how the departments can respond to these changes; and (2) how to balance between the have's & have not's within the region and ensure that each department is in a position to respond safely and effectively.
- Agreement around the room with the general concepts being discussed, but wondered whether we really needed to amalgamate the departments – can't we just amalgamate the budgets?
- Consultant comment: Noted that all fire departments are regional district departments – issue arises as to whether the “formal” mutual aid agreements currently being used are actually necessary, or whether this issue could better be handled through appropriate language in a by law.

- Noted the importance of mutual aid - clarified that “mutual aid” would continue to exist – just would be handled under a different legal format. All of the planning / operational issues would remain for the fire departments and Fire Services Coordinator to settle out in an appropriate fashion.
- Noted some issues and concerns regarding the current “mutual aid”. Some anomalies can be overcome by dispatch protocols – response can be by departments that can respond to some geographical points more quickly.
- Questions on whether it would be possible to move fire suppression boundaries to balance tax bases?
- Grow ops and drug ops are increasing problems – risks to firefighters are increased when they have to respond to these situations; training issues as well.
- Communications and mutual aid response. Better coordination and protocols are needed with dispatch.
- Growing Interface issues as a result of mountain pine beetle killing the forests.
- Increasing pressures on volunteer departments as a result of administrative and training demands (and therefore time commitments), combined with recruiting challenges.
- Unregulated and uncontrolled use of fireworks is a big concern as sale is not regulated and they are used when the forests are at their driest.
- Lack of interest/attention from Provincial Govt. generally regarding the fire service. As an example, it was noted that when the forestry service imposed a campfire ban because of the fire hazard, this ban should be extended to provincial campsites as well.
- Recruitment of younger members. How do we attract them in?
- Possibly offer benefits for the members as an incentive.
- Notes that for US volunteer firefighters, they receive property tax incentives.

3. In terms of governance and considering the current roles of the Fire Suppression Committees (FSC), the Fire Services Coordinator, your Regional District Director, and the Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD), how can your fire department be serviced more efficiently?
- Does the current system work for you – yes or no - why?
 - Is there a governance structure that would serve you more effectively?
 - Does the current reporting relationship(s) work for you?
 - Are the current titles relevant given the changes that have occurred?
 - Is it time to look at unifying adjacent fire departments?
 - At the end of the day, what will the org chart look like?

Fire Suppression Committees:

- Fire Department members have helped make the FSC system work. The committee has informed the department on the issues facing the department and also been a conduit for public input.
- Have had some problems (members occasionally too politicized, wearing two hats – also a fire department member. Conflict of interest can be narrow minded.)
- All of Nicholson Fire Suppression Committee members are also members of the fire department. No community interest in volunteering for the committee. Only way they can do it and still meet some of the obligations under the current Fire Suppression Committee bylaw.
- Most FSC have fire department members on the committee and this has worked well for them.
- The committee has been doing a great job. They do a good job representing the community and its interests (tax issues).
- Have had problems with their Committee in the past, but it is working well now. Difficult getting community out to the annual general meetings and to fill the committee positions.

[Ed. Note: It was noted that the Fire Suppression Committees had complained the previous week of the challenges posed in getting volunteers to serve, and getting the general public to take an interest in the annual general meetings].

- The maximum 6 year term limit is sometimes a problem, particularly as it is difficult to find new volunteers.
- Note that one Fire Chief actively cultivates new committee members. This process has generally worked well for them.
- Took time but finally have an excellent committee. Previous committee had been difficult to deal with - wouldn't let the FD buy anything; they now have to do catch up. This has the effect of pushing lots of capital purchases into a short time frame rather than seeing them spread out over a longer period.
- Notes that there are some issues regarding the use of petty cash and obtaining a purchase order number: this can be too cumbersome. Need to streamline. Can petty cash amount be increased to a larger sum?
- Any necessary equipment is automatically approved. Hall supplies – go buy it. Preapproval for certain types of equipment and supplies and amounts.
- If it is already approved in budget, why does it have to be approved again.
- Noted that it may be helpful to develop a common purchasing policy for all Fire Departments.

[Ed. Note: there was then some discussion amongst the participants, including Gary Holte, Jack Blair and Carolyn Black about the processes that could be followed for departments wishing to purchase items covered by or approved in their budgets. There also was some discussion about the support the Regional District could provide in this regard.]

Fire Services Coordinator:

- Need more checking on whether things have been done, e.g. Training records maintenance, equipment checks, etc. Being “nagged” can be helpful.
- Have used Jack a lot and he has come through for them. Position is instrumental in department operations and has helped with ensuring commonality, and in making equipment purchases.
- Has helped a lot. Has too much on his plate – needs more resources at his end. This is overwhelming for him.
- He keeps us on the right track.

[Ed. Note: The comments regarding Jack Blair as Fire Services Coordinator were all positive. The departments have appreciated his input and assistance. There is some concern that he does not have sufficient resources to do all of the things that the departments would like him to be doing.]

Training needs

- Training officer has toughest job. Need perhaps a regional training officer who can be sent from hall to hall.
- Staff question for clarification: Is this a trainer of training officers, or someone who is supposed to go out and actually train the Fire Department members?
- A mix of these roles may be appropriate.
- Teaching someone how to teach is something that is missing. Need somebody who can help these guys prepare a lesson plan specific to their department.
- Training Officers within the department are not always listened to as well as someone from the outside (e.g., having Jack come in improves attention). Maybe interdepartmental training would be another thing to look at – i.e., have a training officer from another hall provide a “guest” instruction.
- Cites a younger Fire Department with two training officers, but they have no time to put together a plan. This has caused them some issues.
- Noted the need to set out a training plan.
- Identified that the Fire Service Coordinator role is beginning to overlap with the FSC’s and that inconsistency is beginning to take place
- Suggestion that overlap could be eliminated.
- In relation to the Fire Services Coordinator, he noted that there were two roles being played (training and administrative services), and possibly there should be two separate positions.

Additional support from the CSRD

- Development planning and control, and communication about same
- Need support from planning department
- Operational end of the Fire Department needs to have more input into the planning process, and more information about what is being decided
- Emergency Communications (including dispatch)

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- Good finance and budget support - Peter Jarman meets with FSC each year to help set up 5 year budgets.
- Currently, the departments view Jack Blair as being the CSRD's main support.
- There has been a confrontational relationship at times and although this is changing, the CSRD at times seems unwilling to respond to changes in the community.
- Have had some concerns with the Finance department. He could use the finalized form of the budget before it goes to the Board.

[Ed. Note: Generally, it was noted that there was an interest for more centralized administrative support (invoice processing, records keeping etc.)]

- Concern was expressed about potential liability and the increasing administrative burden on the fire departments and the Fire Suppression Committees. Centralizing certain aspects of administration would help relieve this burden and related liability.
- How are unexpected expenses (i.e., a \$3,000 pressure tank) to be covered? Why can reserves not be released?

[Ed. Note: Some discussion then took place regarding the steps needed to be taken to release funds from reserves. Explanation given by staff.]

- Tax question – can we keep the mil rate the same even if we have a surplus in the previous year? Staff members provide explanation on surplus and reserve.

Structure and Reporting Issues:

- There should be 'set-boundaries and a Fire Chief in every area.
- Fire Chief is the spokesman for each department.
- Each community is distinct, better area identification (as opposed to Hall Captain).
- Autonomy helps with recruiting.
- Suggestion that Jack Blair should be designated as the Regional District Fire Chief. Each dept., however, would retain its own fire chief.
- Noted that the geography of areas establish limits on what could be done. Boundaries – still exist. Cut offs and feasible responses exist whether we like it or not.
- Separate districts reinforce accountability/responsibility – can we (fire chiefs) up- load some of the administrative parts of this burden to the Regional District?
- Strong feeling that each department having their own fire chief was important to morale and recruiting.
- Fire services are not getting the financial commitment that they need from CSRD compared, for example, to Parks.
- Role of Fire Chief – if it is an operational role, they need to be located in each fire hall.
- Need to have local direction to deal with local problems.

What is your relationship and what support do you get from your Regional Director? What do you want/need?

- Several chiefs noted that they had good relationships with their regional directors. Many felt that their directors were interested in and supportive of their respective fire departments.

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- At least one department indicated that they had little direct communication with their regional director.
- Most felt that the CSRD as a whole needed to take a more pro-active stance on issues that affected the delivery of fire services (such as fire works control, burning bans, building permitting process/planning control and coordination; building inspection bylaws etc.).
- Many felt that the CSRD Board needed to do a better job of recognizing the contributions of the volunteers and departments.
- Along similar lines, others suggested that the CSRD Board needed to do more to raise the profile of the volunteer departments with the public at large. In particular, it would be helpful if the board could draw the public's attention to the on-going challenges being faced by the departments.
- Staff comment: It was emphasized that the Regional Board members, both individually and collectively, greatly valued the fire services and the commitment shown by the volunteers. Communication of this appreciation, however, obviously could be improved.

4. Of the following 16 topic areas, which are the most important issues to you and why?

- a. Services provided by the Fire Department
- b. Mutual aid agreements
- c. Recruitment and retention of members
- d. Training/training center
- e. Public Education
- f. Fire prevention inspections
- g. Fire investigation and reporting
- h. Dispatch
- i. Communication systems
- j. Purchasing of fire apparatus and equipment
- k. Administrative services
- l. Budget
- m. Operational guidelines (O/G's) and policy related issues
- n. Occupational health and safety issues
- o. Potential liability issues.

Responses

Liability issues, administrative support, occupational Health & Safety

Recruitment and retention, training, liability issues

Recruitment and retention, equipment, liability issues

Recruitment and retention, training, equipment

Services provided, recruitment and retention, training

Recruitment and retention, communications/dispatch, budget

Recruitment and retention, training, communications/dispatch

Recruitment and retention, administrative support, liability issues

Recruitment and retention, fire prevention inspections, communications/dispatch

Liability issues, safety, communications, dispatch

Training, recruitment and retention, occupational Health & Safety

Liability issues, training, services provided.

Results: Recruitment and retention – 8

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Training/training center	- 6
Liability/liability issues	- 5
Communication/Dispatch	- 4
OHS	- 2
Administrative Services	- 2
Services provided	- 2
Fire prevention	- 1
Safety	- 1
Budget	- 1
Equipment needs	- 1

5. Considering the top three topics from the prioritized list, what are your suggestions for improvement to the current system?

Recruitment and retention of members

- Aging population; no young blood around.
- May affect level of service that can be provided
- Need more incentives to attract and retain members.
- Have to put a carrot out there to bring people in.
- CSRD could provide the "carrot".
- Status of the Private member's bill to increase income tax deduction for volunteer FF's.
- General problem that residents want service but don't want to volunteer
- Have to keep the recruiting process going year round. Have to be closely and actively involved with the community.
- CSRD has a role to play here as well. Need to bump up the public relations.
- In some areas, there is a community newsletter that goes out quarterly.
- It was noted that in many cases you had the same volunteers doing multiple jobs.
- CSRD could take the lead in publicising the cost of losing the FD (monetary & otherwise).

Training/training center

- Feels that the training center is too far, other than for evaluation/certification. They aren't using it for maintenance training.
- This can be an issue – need to enhance local department training.
- CSRD needs to support this – regional training officer.
- Need a certified guy to do vehicle servicing, but not training.
- JI used to provide support; new program fell apart.
- Long distance learning using computer network.
- Noted the problem of turnover. Can be a struggle to keep people trained up to basic standard because people leave.
- At what point is a FF permitted to be active at a fire scene?
- Individual commanders at the scene need to be aware of the training of each person on an active fire scene.
- This is covered in the Operational Guidelines.
- Each department needs to decide its own policy as to when their equipment leaves the hall (i.e., when their turn out is sufficient to for an interior attack versus call dispatch for additional equipment or mutual aid).

Potential liability issues.

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- There was a reasonable amount of concern about the growing potential for personal liability if an accident occurred in connection with fire service operations.
- There was some general discussion of the implications of both Bill C-45 and Work Safe BC requirements.
- The general consensus was that greater centralized administrative support from the Regional District would help deal with both the growing paperwork burden and the liability that potentially flows from not maintaining records accurately.
- There was some discussion of the possibility of a centralized computer based records management system (RMS).
- It was also noted that the growing concerns over possible liability was becoming a potential impediment to recruitment and retention.
- Failure to train to proper standards can cause you to be held liable
- Poor training or safety practices can impact retention
- Liability doesn't have to be "scary" when we do what we are mandated to do, do it properly, be diligent, then we shouldn't be on the wrong end of the stick.
- How do we meet these standards with our budgets and available time. Discussion of possible CSRD support and centralizing some administrative functions, roles & oversight.

What is the minimum level of training and experience required for leadership positions in your FD?

Certain minimum standard needs to be set.

We are expecting things of our chiefs that maybe they haven't been trained to. Help is needed in this area

Need training for fire "officers" at all levels.

Would you support a consistent remuneration scale throughout CSRD fire departments?

What criteria & relevant factors would this be based upon?

- Issues related to the remuneration of fire chiefs/officers:
- Tenure/experience
- Qualification as set by authority having jurisdiction
- Hours taken to perform role based on expectancy
- Area you cover (call outs/year)
- Size of department (# members)
- Most are not there to be paid, but shouldn't be out of pocket for volunteering.
- Recognition is as important as money.

[Ed. Note: there was a general discussion of remuneration. It was noted that people did not volunteer because of the "pay" per call; nor was it likely that the pay amounts would ever be sufficiently high to be a real inducement to join. That being said, it was noted that volunteers should not be out of pocket as a result of their work (or training) with the department. Any standardized remuneration system should be designed to ensure that their costs are reasonably covered.]

Expanding Services:

- Road rescue, First medical responder, marine rescue/fires. What are the demands going to be for each area over the next 5 to 10 year period? What

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training is needed, what resources are needed, what budget considerations exist?

- Staff response: additional services are excluded from the terms of reference for this project as there is a need to move through the review of the fire services incrementally. When the structure and governance issues are dealt with the topic of additional services may be brought forward.

Fire Prevention/Education:

- Currently not provided uniformly or coordinated.
- Several areas support and distribute the Fire Smart Program and do presentations at times with the BC Forest Service
- Several do the school programs – drawing fire plans/escape plans.
- Staff comment: to implement this, additional CSRD resources are required.
- At a minimum, there should be an ongoing school program.
- What about fire prevention/safety inspections?
- General agreement - particularly for businesses, motels, hotels, marinas. Agreed that fire prevention/safety inspections should be introduced simultaneous to building inspection – companion documents...

End of day summary / recap (liked/disliked/saw value in)

- Has concerns related to restriction on discussion around addition services.
- Standards of response coverage, future strategic planning.
- If we can help out other departments, and save one life, then it's worthwhile.
- Issues and problems are common to all departments.
- Would like to see road rescue/first responder issue on table.
- Wants positive results out of the expenditure of time.
- Enjoyed & learned.
- A good day.
- Good discussion - good points raised.
- Want to see what comes out of the training side
- Good meeting. Need to consider highway rescue. Would like to have had a chance to meet with members of the other groups (FSC) as well.
- 99% of the way; but not discussing highway rescue/first responder issue was a mistake.

15. Appendix D: Notes from Meeting with CSRD Regional Directors

Meeting held May 14, 2008 in the CSRD Board Room 1:30 – 3:45 p.m.

Present:

Directors:

Ron Oszust, Electoral Area 'A'
Ted Bacigalupo, Electoral Area 'C'
Rene Talbot, Electoral Area 'D'
Rhona Martin, Electoral Area 'E'
Denis Delisle, Electoral Area 'F'

Columbia Shuswap Regional District staff:

Doug Dymond, Manager, Works Services
Gary Holte, Deputy Manager, Works Services
Carolyn Black, Works Services Assistant
Jack Blair, Fire Services Coordinator
Alan Kuroyama, CAO
Ted Holmes, CFO
Kathy Gilbert, Deputy Manager Development Services

Consultants:

Dave Mitchell
John Vokes

2 members of the public.

The Deputy Manager, Works Services provided an introduction and background to the purpose of the fire services review followed by a brief presentation by John Vokes describing the process. The Fire Services Co-ordinator noted the role of Fire Suppression Committees and Volunteer Fire Departments per current bylaws (structural and interface fire fighting).

Additional Services (i.e.
Highway Rescue)

Directors had the following questions or comments.

Did the issue of highway rescue come up?

It was noted that future services were not part of the review, though this question was raised; Gary Holte commented that once this initial review is completed and “we have our house in order” the Regional District may consider addressing this and other issues

Some of the issues include where multiple departments respond to highway rescue incidents; it is not always clear who is in charge when there are rescue units from two separate communities

There haven't been any changes in the role of our fire departments (fighting structure fires); one issue is the challenge of recruitment and retention making it hard to get enough volunteers for firefighting, much less for adding road rescue.

Additional Services (i.e.
Highway Rescue)
(cont.)

Why don't we have the mandate for rescue as well as fire fighting?

Jack Blair noted that the Salmon Arm Fire department does not carry out road rescue. At the present time there are 4 or 5 good road rescue groups that offer service in the CSRD and that to the best of his knowledge there has never been a death as a result of a lack of road rescue by the fire departments. It was further noted that the Regional District Fire Departments also don't provide hazmat response. Gary Holte indicated that the issue of road rescue was raised at the April 12th meeting with Fire Chiefs and Officers, but was not given the highest priority. Many other issues were raised with a higher level of importance.

STRUCTURED QUESTIONS

Question 1: From the perspective of an elected official, what are the most important issues related to fire protection within the CSRD?

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Director Bacigalupo | <input type="checkbox"/> Area C has 4 departments, 3 struggling to keep their numbers up; retention is an issue; need to create an incentive to stay on; |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Also need to address total area coverage (currently lacking) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Expanding mandate |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving response time |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Need for standardized equipment for all departments |
| Director Delisle | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment and retention |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> The need for in-house training from somebody outside the department. The existing training officers are often taxed to the limit in their time; (Director) was a fire chief once; training is the most important thing |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting the Fire Chief by relieving paper work duties that could be moved to someone else (office/administration assistance) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Better remuneration for fire department |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> important for the Fire Service Committee(s) to have a meaningful role with the community |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio communications |

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Question 1: From the perspective of an elected official, what are the most important issues related to fire protection within the CSRD?

- Director Oszust
- Expanding and/or creating service for areas that don't currently have fire suppression
 - the need to ensure that current mapping is available for the fire departments (i.e. new streets)
 - Need for equity in service delivery
 - Training should be delivered as locally as possible. Volunteers must often give up their holiday time by weeks to attend training for their community. Will this turn into full time staff at some point?
 - Retention and recruitment
 - Regarding the role of the LAFC and Jack Blair's role, there has been a huge improvement since Jack started; critical that we optimize the response to interface fires.
 - Public Education (prevention)
John Vokes noted that this is within the mandate of this review
- Director Martin
- In some areas there is a need to develop a secondary source of water; in some areas will need to add a second fire hall.
- Director Talbot
- Recruitment and retention
 - Radio communication is an issue.
Doug Dymond noted that there is a second consultation underway to review radio communication area at the present time

Question 2: At this time, each fire protection area has its own bylaw and Fire Suppression Committee that oversees various aspects of their individual fire department and conduct a number of administrative functions. What do you see as the challenges for the current system as you understand it?

- Director Delisle
- Community involvement is necessary
 - Lack of interest from the community
- Director Talbot
- Difficulty in getting volunteers for these Committees
 - Many of the Fire Suppressions Committee members don't know what their functions are.
Doug Dymond noted that many of the committee members indicated that they did not fully understand their roles.
- Director Martin
- Should have a mail system for pickup and delivery
 - The Committee is a valuable tool.

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Question 2: At this time, each fire protection area has its own bylaw and Fire Suppression Committee that oversees various aspects of their individual fire department and conduct a number of administrative functions. What do you see as the challenges for the current system as you understand it?

- Director Oszust The Committee provides the benefit of local knowledge
- Director Bacigalupo Some fire department members originally felt threatened by the Fire Services Co-ordinator position. Within their own communities, people feel a lot of ownership regarding a particular issue and when the Fire Services Co-ordinator provides direction, it is viewed as word from the outside. Doug Dymond indicated that fire suppression committees did not relate this as an issue at their April 5th meeting but were in fact very complimentary and grateful for his assistance.
- some firefighters have expressed the concern that they didn't get the chance to speak directly to the review and that their Chief does not always bring their issues forward
- Suggest that each individual firefighter be invited to offer input into the review.

Question 3: Given that several Fire Suppression Committees are experiencing difficulty in attracting volunteer members as specified within the bylaw that forms these committees, what options do you see for the future operation of these committees?

- Director Bacigalupo What is the alternative? The average person needs to have a vehicle for input; Fire Service committees have done an okay job, but could be improved.
- Gary Holte noted that there was some discussion at both the April 5th Fire Suppression Committee and the April 12th Fire Chief and Officer meetings for some degree of sub-regional amalgamation.
- Director Delisle May need a discussion between the Fire Suppression Committees to better define their roles, understand their problems.
- For Electoral Area 'F', rather than 3 departments; sub-regional amalgamation would be good
- Director Martin Some training for the committees would be helpful
- None of the members of my Malakwa fire suppression committee attended the meeting

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Question 3: Given that several Fire Suppression Committees are experiencing difficulty in attracting volunteer members as specified within the bylaw that forms these committees, what options do you see for the future operation of these committees?

Director Bacigalupo There would be some merit in combining some of the suppression committees

Question 4: One of the major issues that emerged from discussions with the Fire Suppression Committees, Fire Chiefs/Officers, and with CSRD staff is the growing concern of rapid expansion of residential and commercial development, and seasonal population growth.

What are the issues for the fire service related to this development as you understand them?

What steps can be taken to address these concerns? In other words, how do you see the role of the fire services within the CSRD changing to meet the needs of rapid development and seasonal population expansion?

Director Bacigalupo There is an increased fire threat by vacationers (i.e. fireworks)

Director Martin Should have material available to give to people/visitors

 Create an opportunity for a seasonal volunteer

Director Delisle Should have the Fire Department involved in the planning effort (i.e. bylaw referrals).

 Update equipment to meet growth

 Remove paperwork requirement from fire chief and fire suppression committee

Director Delisle (cont.) Interface fire risk

 Increase training

 Water access is a problem for some

 Improve radio communication

 Strategic planning

Director Oszust Make people more aware of the rural living and the challenges that flow from that

 Density issues

 There is no money for being pre-emptive – prevention programs

Director Bacigalupo Send bylaw referrals to fire departments/fire suppression committees for comment

 Fire fuel removal program

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Question 4: One of the major issues that emerged from discussions with the Fire Suppression Committees, Fire Chiefs/Officers, and with CSRD staff is the growing concern of rapid expansion of residential and commercial development, and seasonal population growth.

What are the issues for the fire service related to this development as you understand them?

What steps can be taken to address these concerns? In other words, how do you see the role of the fire services within the CSRD changing to meet the needs of rapid development and seasonal population expansion?

Director Martin Fire safe/ prevention education and rural fire department information could be provided to real estate agents to pass along to new home owners.

Question 5: The top four (4) priorities for action as determined by the Fire Chiefs/Officers are:

1. Recruitment and retention of volunteer fire fighters,
2. Potential liability issues,
3. Training needs / response readiness for emerging hazards,
4. Workload caused by administrative demands.

How would you as an elected official support your fire department in dealing with these priorities?

Director Oszust Budget challenges will need to be addressed (additional costs)

Recognize firefighters with hats, vests, etc.

Closing

The consultants closed the meeting by noting for the record that their experience to date with the Fire Chiefs, the Fire Service Committees, and the Regional District staff can be characterized as follows:

- Very professional and respectful discussions from the fire chiefs and the committees We didn't see anyone who didn't want the service to improve
- From the beginning there has been strong support from staff at the Regional District
- The world is changing and certainly in the fire services world; our experience with many fire departments and regional districts demonstrates:
 1. There is a real competition for people's time...they have more opportunities for how to use their non-work time

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2. The risks are higher, but for each of these, there are appropriate responses and strategies
3. The Columbia Shuswap Regional District is taking a leadership role, probably the most in-depth review undertaken to date in BC.

16. Appendix E: Meetings with Finance Department Staff

Primary Roles/Involvement

- Role of Finance Department is finance, emergency preparedness, IT, HR, FOI, risk management planning
- Primary involvement with the fire departments and Fire Suppression Committees (FSC) is to meet and develop the 5 year budget and capital plan
- More manageable to deal with one big fire department instead of 13 small ones
- equal service for equal service
- says the ability of most FSC has moved beyond their capability
- Currently rely on FSC for input on needs of each department although can over-ride if they don't agree

Things have evolved with many changes since Jack Blair arrived

- FSC have good intentions but should be coming to the regional district for support
- i.e., petty cash – anything under \$300.00 --- says this is NOT right
- Says anything over \$5.00 should be coming to the regional district for payment
- Acknowledges that this type of change will impact the RD support structure
- Regional District pays bills every week – often bills are two months old when they are received from FSC
- FSC should step away from this role
- Praise for Jack's leadership to bring common direction

Two areas that are necessary:

- are centralized administration for volunteer support
- also centralized records management system
- additional centralized services should be for incident recording and minutes of all meetings
 - o two wrongs... currently FSC in charge of money and fire departments
 - o someone needs to authorize the expenditure
 - o the FSC may or may not confer with fire chief on needs

Fire departments – notwithstanding volunteer – are local government services and survive with local tax support

- some form of administrative and structured input is required
- FSC need to understand that these are regional district assets

A new FSC role could be to:

- facilitate an annual meeting with the community to learn how their fire services are operating and are funded
- Public relations for the fire department within the community
- to provide respite support /refreshments to responders
- oversight role with a social aspect to it
- Communication link to the community
- Is the community getting good value by having their money handled in this way?

More discussion on FSC

- size of committees – unruly – difficult to get a quorum and to gain consensus

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- inability to fill positions – in violation of own bylaw
- the current system conflicts with what taxpayers are getting – value for \$\$\$

Timing of Payments:

- payments take far too long
- complaints from vendors
- regional staff have to track down invoices with FSC
- members of FSC may not be available to approve expenditure
- one person may have the key to the mailbox and be away

Believe that members of FSC are well intentioned although questions understanding of business matters

Extreme Measure – do away with local FSC altogether

- do all administration at RD level
- How does the FSC support volunteerism within their areas?
- i.e., fire department wanted license plate brackets – FSC said no – easy fix for morale – turned down....

Is it time to look at integration of fire departments within the emergency plan – cross training for emergency management – ESS and fire? What would the community say to this? Community probably already think this is in place...

Says that generally they have more problems with the chairs of the FSC than with the fire chiefs

One point to consider on amalgamation of service areas is that assets belong to the taxed area – the debt also belongs to the area that incurred it

To change this would mean the creation of new service areas through referendum

- approval of new budgets
- repeals all existing bylaws for FSC and fire departments
- can be done but may not get passed by voters
- those areas that have no debt would vote it down and be outnumbered by the areas that have a small population and have debt.

BIG ISSUE... transient population...

- owners of seasonal residences are not at the meetings
- says it is their responsibility to know the impact
- says development is dependant on the volatile economy in Alberta
 - o impact on infrastructure issues
 - fire
 - emergency preparedness
 - water
 - liquid and solid waste issues
 - interface issues

17. Appendix F: Input from Development Services

1. Which areas of the CSRD currently have planning / development requirements in place? Which areas are in the process of developing OCPs or similar planning / development requirements and when are these slated to be completed and implemented?
 - *Area 'A' Rural Golden:* No current or future plans for an OCP. No building regs or zoning yet.
 - *Area 'B' Rural Revelstoke:* Land Use bylaw 2200 currently exists for a portion of the plan area. There is no existing OCP in place however, a newly developed OCP will go to 3rd reading by the Board in June and probably adoption by late summer. Updated zoning bylaws will follow once the OCP is adopted. No building regs yet.
 - *Area 'E' Rural Sicamous/Malakwa:* Land Use Bylaw 2000 is currently in place for a portion of the plan area. There is no existing OCP, however, a process is underway to develop an OCP for the area. The estimated time of completion is winter 2009. Updated zoning bylaws will follow once the OCP is adopted. No building regs yet.
 - *Area 'D':* Land use zoning bylaws are in place for Rancho/Deep Creek and the Salmon Valley. There are no current OCPs in place, however, an OCP for Rancho/Deep Creek is currently being developed which will be presented to the public mid-June in a draft form. The estimated time of completion is summer 2009. Updated zoning bylaws will follow once the OCP is adopted. No building regs yet.
 - *Area 'F' North Shuswap:* There are currently land use bylaws in place for: Anglemont, Magna Bay, and Scotch Creek/Lee Creek. No current OCPs in place however an OCP is currently being developed for the entire area that is estimated to be completed by and adopted by spring 2009. Updated zoning bylaws will follow once the OCP is adopted. Building regulation does exist in the N. Shuswap for: Lee Creek, Scotch Creek, Celista, Magna Bay, Anglemont and St. Ives.
 - *Area 'C' South Shuswap:* Land use zoning is currently in place for the South Shuswap and Kault Hill portions of the area. An OCP currently exists for the South Shuswap however, a new OCP is currently being developed to cover the entire electoral area. The estimated time for completion and adoption for this OCP is spring 2009. No build regs yet.
 - A subdivision servicing bylaw is current in place and applies to entire CSRD. The development of new subdivision servicing bylaw is currently underway and slated to be completed approximately by summer 2009.

2. Are issues related to fire protection / delivery of fire services specifically incorporated into (a) any existing planning laws; and (b) any proposed planning laws/OCPs?

Bylaw 700, the South Shuswap OCP, has 2 policy statements that recommend allowing development in hazardous areas (interface is listed) with caution. There is also a policy that encourages us to seek the fire departments' views on the potential impact of development the fire departments' protective services and capabilities.

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The other policy documents are:

Bylaw 2000 – Rural Sicamous
Bylaw 2100 – Rancho – Deep Creek
Bylaw 2200 – Rural Revelstoke
Bylaw 2500 – Salmon Valley

These are all land use bylaws, formerly known as rural land use bylaws under legislation that no longer exists. These are all silent with respect to fire protection. Rural land use bylaw legislation was quite narrow in terms of what could be included in a RLUB, and I am quite sure there was no reference to services of this type.

Our draft OCP's support provisions to make assessments of wildfire interface risks. One of the key development criteria is to include best practice interface forest fire mitigation techniques for building and landscaping.

3. Is the process for approving subdivision uniform across the CSRD, or does it vary from area to area?

Yes, the process is the same throughout the CSRD. Please see the attached flowchart for a description of the process.

4. Are Fire Departments routinely kept informed of the subdivision applications and their status?

Currently this is not routinely done. See answer to Q 5.

5. What is the current involvement and/or level of communication with fire departments regarding (i) new developments (ii) variations to approved developments and (iii) water systems by Development Services? In relation to planning and development applications, do you request input or agreement from fire chiefs in matters related to fire protection?

Currently an informal protocol exists to inform fire departments of any fire related issue that may arise from new developments and variations to existing developments. This occurs on an ad hoc basis between Dev. Services staff and Jack Blair who then informs the fire chiefs. Works services are responsible for communicating issues around water systems.

- a. In your opinion, is this satisfactory? Yes.

6. What is the current experience in the effectiveness and value of any input or feedback that you receive from the fire chiefs/fire departments?

Input received from our Fire Services coordinator has been very useful. For example, Jack has provided valuable feed input with regard to determining building height regulation and also assisted staff by commenting on applications to close road allowances for lake access. Jack is Development Service's staff preferred point of contact.

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7. One of the concerns raised by the Board of Directors was related to the rapid development taking place and that streets are being added to areas without input from the fire department. Is this an area that Development Services could assist the fire departments or is there another solution to keeping the fire departments informed of changes and additions to street systems within their respective response areas?

Currently mapping is not provided to the fire departments. However, Don Richmond, special projects assistant, will be asked to provide new property address maps to the fire departments on an ad hoc basis.

8. Based on development projections over the next five (5) years, what is the overall outlook for development including:
 - a. type of developments,

As of late, the CSRD has witnessed an increase in the number of high density resort type developments (e.g.; Hummingbird Beach Resort, Carmel Cove, Gateway Falls, Hyde Mountain etc.). These are typically medium to up-scale cabin/chalet type units. It is likely that that this trend will continue as more people retire and demand second homes for recreational purposes. Our draft OCPs encourage that any new residential developments be located in designated settlement areas of a higher density - as long as they are adequately serviced by community sewer and water. Such development could likely be in the form of duplexes, four-plexes, townhouses and other cluster type developments.

- b. estimated population growth,

2006	50,141
2011*	56,600
2016*	59,800
2021*	62,700
2026*	65,100
2031*	67,000

Source: BC STATS, 2006. *estimated

It is important to note that these numbers represent the permanent resident populations. The North and South Shuswap and parts of Area 'E' (Swansea Point and Hyde Mtn) have significant numbers of resort cottages/cabins, summer homes, RV parks, campgrounds etc. that experience large numbers of visitors in the summer months – especially on weekends. The population of the N. Shuswap undoubtedly more than doubles during these peak times.

- c. Where most development is expected to take place?

Most likely in the North and South Shuswap as this is where the majority of current development is focused. There are also large developments proposed for Malakwa (Area E) and Area D (Canoe Creek Golf Course).

18. Appendix G: Compiled Responses from Five Regional Districts

1. Structure

- a. Is the regional district the owner all of the fire departments?
 i. If not, what is the mix and what is the RD's relationship with the departments it does not own (i.e., is it by contract)?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
RD owns assets 13 Departments	RD owns assets 17 Departments	RD owns assets 6 Departments	RD owns assets 6 halls – 1 Department	RD owns assets 13 fire Departments

b. Oversight/Governance:

- i. How is the RD fire service organized? Do you use:
 1. Fire suppression committees
 2. Citizen's advisory committee
 a. Terms of reference
 b. Term of office
 3. Other?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
Fire Commission - name own services, own bylaw, separate tax area, direct relationship to FD, departments operate autonomously	Each FD has own bylaw, no citizen involvement, report to coordinator for services	Departments report to Electoral Services Committee. Chiefs report to Fire Service Coordinator	District chiefs report directly to Regional chief	Local Service Advisory Committee – can be called upon for input on matters related to fire, lighting, sewers etc

- ii. How are taxation levels set for fire services? Is it uniform across the Regional District?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	RD Fraser Fort George
Individual protection areas – not	Individual protection areas – not	Individual protection areas – not	Central decision-making	Individual – not uniform – may be increased by

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uniform	uniform	uniform	Is uniform throughout region	referendum
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iii. What is the average mil rate for fire services in the RD?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
\$1.00/\$1K	0.26 to 1.20/\$1K	0.52 – 1.57/\$1K	Based on assessed value	\$0.704 - \$1.9298/\$1K
		\$1.0065/\$1K	Uniform throughout region	Avg. \$1.2970/\$1K

iv. What is the process for establishing FD budgets?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
Established in bylaw	Director discretion with input from Fire Chief	Annual needs assessment	Developed by regional chief in consultation with District needs	Fire and Deputy Chief do initial budget – meet with RD staff for review then recommended to Board for approval

2. Relationships of/with fire departments

- a. Reporting relationship to:
- i. Regional director
 - ii. Regional district staff
 - iii. Fire services coordinator
 - iv. Other

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
Relationship based solely on RD being owner of assets	1/3 no rapport 1/3 good rapport w/Coordinator 1/3 report to directors	Chiefs report to Manager of Protective Services	Report to Regional Chief ONLY	Fire chief is appointed by Board – RD staff and FSC provide support

3. Remuneration of fire chiefs, fire officers, fire fighters

- a. What is the remuneration scale?

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- b. Based on what criteria?
- c. Benefits/perks/other?

Caribou RD	Central Koot RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
	All volunteers Stipends - \$1K to \$1.5 based on service, socials	Donations to Fire Fighter fund range from \$500 to \$14K, chief/officers receive up to \$4K/yr	District chiefs - \$2.8K/year, A/C's - \$1K/yr in addition to \$10/hour for all members	Chiefs - \$0 to \$350/ mo; Dep. Chief – to \$100/ mo; A/C to \$50/mo.; T/O to \$100/ mo; FF \$10/practice +\$10/hr for call-out. Socials/VFIS Insurance

4. What involvement (if any) does the regional district have in the training of fire fighters?

- a. How do you ensure minimum proficiency of fire personnel?
- b. How do you ensure competency of fire fighters for interior attack?
- c. If training of fire fighters is not a regional responsibility do you have an interest or a position on this point?

Caribou RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
None - individual dept responsibility	Determined by individual depts., 6 of 17 depts need help	OG's, for all depts., training done in-house, no set program aside from NFPA standards	FF certified to FF1; no officer training; all get live fire	O/G's approved by Board FF trained in each task See FF as employees and train for safe work

5. Criteria for promotion to officer/training officer etc.?

- a. Election
- b. Seniority
- c. Training/educational achievement

Caribou RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
Selected from senior FFs; no written requirements	Elections, FD elects, Board approves, no term limits	Elections, strong volunteer support for this system; 2 year	Dist chiefs appointed by Gary; other are based on best candidate w/l	Appointed by fire chief within promotional guidelines – in-house postings

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		limit	each hall	
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6. How do fire chiefs in your regional district achieve their position?

- a. Election?
- b. Promotional system with established criteria?
- c. Is there a term limit placed on the fire chief position?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
Recommended to Director and Rowena - appointed by Board	Elections, FD members elect, Board approves, no term limits	Elections w/ 2 year limit	Appointed by Gary – best candidate – skills/performance	Within promotional guidelines – approved by Regional Board

7. Regional support for fire departments:

- a. From Regional director
- b. From Regional staff
- c. From Fire services coordinator (if applicable)

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
Administrative / operations	Directors very supportive; finance dept assist with budgets	Some ongoing purchases; fire hall construction; apparatus standards	All support through Regional Fire Chief	Support through the Fire Services Coordinator

8. Other regional services that support fire department activity

- a. Fire training/training center?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
Train at T/Cs in region based on individual needs/interest	Use Selkirk College in Nelson	Vancouver Island Emergency Response Academy - Nanaimo	T/O in each hall, coordinated by career T/O in Trail; Live fire at Selkirk College, Nelson	No

- b. Building inspection?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George

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				RD
No – Permits are required, but no inspection	Yes, by Regional District throughout region	Yes, throughout entire region	Yes, by Regional District throughout region	Only to RDFFG-owned buildings

c. Are the views of the fire services integrated into the planning process for major new developments? If so, how?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
N/A	Only starting to include fire departments in discussion	Some, based on recommendations	Yes, plan review, sign-off by career staff at occupancy	FC consulted on new developments by RD staff and developers

d. Fire inspections to commercial premise – by whom?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
No	No	No	Yes, by career staff only - all public buildings	no

e. Public education?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley RD	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
Fire Smart only	Some do/most don't – Fire Smart used by all	Limited to Fire Prevention week and Fire Smart	Yes, schools, Fire Smart, one rep from each hall on a Public Ed committee	Regional Fire and Life Safety committee (reps from each FD) coordinate activity

f. Purchasing – bulk/group?

Cariboo RD	Central Kootenay RD	Cowichan Valley	Kootenay Boundary RD	Fraser Fort George RD
No	Purchasing policy in place based on spending limits, but no central	Minimal – develop apparatus specs and research	Approved by Technical committee – one rep from each hall;	FSC coordinates purchasing and product research for

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	purchasing	product availability only	centralized mechanical services; group purchases based on forecast of needs	FDs
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g. Incident reporting to OFC/LAFC duties?

<i>Cariboo RD</i>	<i>Central Kootenay RD</i>	<i>Cowichan Valley RD</i>	<i>Kootenay Boundary RD</i>	<i>Fraser Fort George RD</i>
No	No	No LAFCs	Yes, career staff	Each department decides who is LAFC and reports fires to OFC. Where there is no LAFC, the RCMP report the fires to OFC

19. Appendix H: Responses, Losses, Population, Membership

Department	Members - '08	Population '08	Responses '03	Responses '04	Responses '05	Responses '06	Responses '07	'07 Dollar Loss
Anglemont	15	600	10	7	10	2	9	\$0
Celista	15	500	15	6	8	5	9	\$150K
Eagle Bay	15	500	5	3	9	5	7	\$15K
Falkland	19	1,300	19	14	12	17	9	\$137K
Malakwa	15	1,000	21	17	7	11	8	\$3K
Nicholson	19	1,000	24	7	7	18	8	\$40K
Ranchero/Deep Cove	19	2,000	14	14	14	20	20	\$560K
Scotch Creek/Lee Creek	18	1,000	20	11	19	7	11	\$250K
Shuswap	28	4,100	28	27	27	46	38	\$571K
Silver Creek	11	1,100	11	8	6	4	8	\$100K
Swansea Point	18	300	8	3	4	5	4	\$0
Tappen/Sunnybrae	15	1,500	14	16	16	18	20	\$2.5K
White Lake	16	600	8	1	4	6	7	\$30.1K

Information is taken from the Fire Service Co-ordinator Annual Reports

20. Appendix I: Alphabetical Index of Fire Suppression Areas and Related Bylaws

1. **Anglemont Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "F")**. By-laws: 1005 (24/11/78) and 5274 (19/8/99).
2. **Celista Fire Suppression (Electoral Area "F")**. Bylaws: 1230 (12/5/86); 5082 (23/4/92); 5277 (19/8/99).
3. **Eagle Bay Fire Suppression (Electoral Area "C")**. Bylaws: 5027 (20/7/90); 5275 (19/8/99); 5284 (19/8/99).
4. **Falkland Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "D")**. Bylaws: 1050 (22/3/80); 5131 (16/9/93); 5137 (21/10/93); 5262 (19/8/99); 5413 (27/01/05).
5. **Malakwa Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "E")**. Bylaws: 1260 (23/04/87); 5066 (15/8/91); 5074 (20/12/91); 5102 (20/1/93); 5120 (22/7/93); 5139 (19/5/94); 5187 (19/10/95) 5247 (16/7/98) 5276 (19/8/99); 5297 (17/12/99).
6. **Nicholson Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "A")**. Bylaws: 1154 (24/3/83); 5260 (19/8/99).
7. **Ranchero/Deep Creek Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "D")**. Bylaws: 1158 (22/3/80); 5261 (16/9/93).
8. **Scotch Creek/Lee Creek Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "F")**. Bylaws: 1193 (13/09/84); 5263 (19/8/99).
9. **Silver Creek Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "D")**. Bylaws: 1279 (18/12/87); 5067 (15/8/91); 5278 (19/8/99).
10. **Sorrento/Blind Bay Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "C")**. Bylaws: 175 (25/11/1975); 5208 (15/8/96); 5264 (19/8/99).
11. **Swansea Point Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "E")**. Bylaws: 1061 (18/1/80); 5259 (19/8/99).
12. **Tappen Sunnybrae Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "C")**. Bylaws: 1280 (18/12/87); 1291 (19/5/88); 5026 (14/12/90); 5032 (14/12/90); 5078 (20/12/91); 5191 (18/1/96); 5252 (19/11/98); 5273 (19/8/99); 5483 (20/9/07).
13. **White Lake Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "C")**. Bylaws: 1069 (21/11/80); 1339 (17/8/89); 5265 (19/8/99).

Contract Fire Suppression Areas.

1. **Electoral Area "B"**: Bylaw 90 (21/11/1975). **NOTE: missing the schedule.**
2. **Kault Hill (Electoral Area "C")**: Bylaw 5290 (16/09/99).
3. **Sicamous (Rural) Fire Suppression Area (Electoral Area "E")**: 5011 (29/3/90); 5163 (16/3/95); 5173 (20/7/95); 5181 (20/7/95); 5204 (18/7/96); 5258 (18/3/99); 5313 (17/8/00); 5316 (16/11/00); 5436 (18/5/06).

21. Appendix J: Detailed Comments on Bylaws, Mutual Aid Agreements and Fire Services Contracts

The following are detailed comments on the bylaws, mutual aid agreements and fire service contracts provided to the Consultants for review as part of the examination of the governance structure of the CSRD Fire Services. While basic summaries have been prepared as part of the analysis, they are not included. Instead, this Appendix is limited to comments on issues that require consideration, even if the recommendations in the main report are not adopted.

Our comments are limited to the substance of the documents. We have not considered the form, manner of passing, legal authority of the parties involved or similar matters

This review does not constitute legal advice and some issues identified here should be considered with the CSRD's legal advisers. There may be other issues or matters of concern which have not been identified in this review.

Bylaws.

1. *13 Major Fire Suppression Area Establishment and related Bylaws:*

No comments.

2. *Contract Fire Suppression Area Establishment Bylaws:*

a. Electoral Area "B" (Revelstoke area). Bylaw 90

This bylaw limits the CSRD to negotiating a contract with Revelstoke to provide fire services. It does not provide any other authority (so, if Revelstoke became too expensive or decided to terminate the service for any reason, it is not possible to consider creating a local fire suppression unit under this bylaw – an amendment or new bylaw would be required).

There does not appear to be an amending bylaw converting this to a local service. There is no maximum tax rate for the service stipulated in the original bylaw. Under the bylaw, taxes are supposed to be set on the basis of the value of "all lands and improvements on the basis of assessment fixed for taxation for school purposes, excluding property that is taxable for school purposes only by special Act, within the said Specified Area".

b. Kault Hill (Bylaw 5290) and Rural Sicamous (Bylaw 5011)

This establishment bylaw is somewhat broader than the previous one, permitting the CSRD to enter into a contract, in the case of Kault Hill, with the District of Salmon "or others", and in the case of Rural Sicamous, with the District of Sicamous "or others". In either case, if it became necessary or advisable to create a local fire suppression unit, a bylaw amendment likely would be necessary. (It is acknowledged that the likelihood of separate fire services being required for these areas is probably very small.)

3. *Operational Criteria Bylaw – Bylaw 5286*

Bylaw 5286 sets out the operational criteria for the CSRD's volunteer fire department. The following issues should be noted:

Definition of "Incident" (s. 1). The powers of a Fire Chief arise in response to an "Incident". The definition in the bylaw is too narrow and should be expanded. The current definition reads as follows:

"means a fire or situation where a fire or explosion is in progress or imminent **and** the assistance of the fire department has been requested." (emphasis added)

In theory, this means that if no assistance has been requested, there is no "Incident". The second element of the definition can be left out; alternatively, the word "and" can be changed to "or".

Establishment of Fire Department Jurisdiction (s. 2). This section should explicitly contemplate and permit travel by a department outside of its jurisdictional boundaries for the purpose of either responding to a mutual aid call or to gain access to a portion of its own boundaries. There also should be express permission to respond outside of the jurisdiction on the request of the Provincial Emergency Program ("PEP"), upon obtaining a PEP number. Consideration also should be given to permitting fire fighting outside of the jurisdiction in interface situations, where the fire is deemed by the Fire Chief to be an imminent or immediate hazard to his or her Fire Suppression Area. The latter issue should be checked with the CSRD's insurers and requiring some external authorization before acting (e.g., from the Fire Services Co-ordinator, or the Manager, Works Services), may be appropriate.

Powers of the Fire Chief or designate (ss. 5-6). The powers accorded to the Fire Chiefs (or their designates) when dealing with an Incident, are narrower and more restricted than those provided for in section 522 of the *Local Government Act* (B.C.) and section 25 of the *Fire Services Act* (B.C.). They should be broadened to ensure that all steps necessary to control a fire are authorized by the bylaw.

Fire Services Co-ordinator. The bylaw should be amended to include the Fire Services Co-ordinator's position. The extent of authority granted to this individual by bylaw is the subject of one of the report's main recommendations. Regardless of whether these recommendations are accepted, the Co-ordinator should be included in this bylaw.

4. *Fire Suppression Committee – Bylaw 5285*

The report recommends extensive revisions to the structure and role of the FSCs. If those recommendations are not adopted, the existing bylaw 5285 should be modified:

- to specify the FSCs reporting lines and obligations more clearly;
- to require the FSCs to develop annual work plans and submit them to Works Services; and
- to clarify the actual extent of the FSCs' administrative responsibilities and authorities.

5. Mutual Aid Bylaw – Bylaw 5114

This bylaw authorizes the CSRD to enter into mutual aid agreements for “fire suppression and assistance response inside or outside of the service area”.

The meaning of the term “assistance response” is unclear. The bylaw should permit the departments to provide only the services that they are qualified to deliver within their own service area. Properly constructed, it will permit more than “fire suppression” if, at some point in the future, “specialty” services, such as auto extrication, first medical responder, HazMat, etc., are added.

Mutual Aid Agreements

We were provided with a total of five mutual aid agreements for review. The following comments apply to all of the agreements (unless otherwise noted):

1. General Comments

- a. Each agreement should include a more precise definition of the departments involved, and the respective service areas covered by the arrangement. In the case of the agreement between Malakwa, Swansea Point and the District of Sicamous, it should probably expressly include “Rural Sicamous” (which is serviced under contract by the District of Sicamous) in the mutual aid coverage area.
- b. The agreements should specifically limit mutual aid requests to activities which the responding party is authorized to provide (so, at present for CSRD departments, that would be fire suppression activities only). The definition of “overwhelming situation” or “Emergency” is much broader than this.
- c. In each case, other than the agreement involving the various CSRD departments around Shuswap Lake (which is discussed in greater detail below), the indemnity language covering negligence by the “receiving party” should be revised (this is typically found in s. 14 or s. 15 of the agreements).

This indemnity section is part of the mutual indemnification against negligence contained in the agreement – if a department is negligent, it agrees to indemnify the other departments against the losses it causes. The provision covering negligence by the “receiving party” (which is the party that called for the mutual aid), however, talks about the indemnification being provided to the “responding party” for the “emergency services requested” by the responding party. The responding party, of course, did not request any emergency services.

This provision should be modified to read something like: “any error, omission or negligent act on the part of the receiving party in delivering its emergency services in connection with the overwhelming situation”.

2. Master Mutual Aid Agreement

The CSRD departments bordering Shuswap Lake have entered into a master mutual aid agreement. The indemnity provision is substantially different in this agreement. It requires that a requesting party indemnify the responding parties against all claims

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alleging damage or injury (including death) caused by the responding party “in the performance of this Agreement”. This indemnity is given even if the claim arises “through a wilful or negligent act or omission of the responding party, its officers, servants, agents or employees”.

It is not clear why a different indemnity has been put into this agreement and the rationale for it should be subject to scrutiny. More importantly, the terms of this provision need to be reviewed with the CSRD’s insurer, the Municipal Insurance Agency (“MIA”). The MIA generally will not insure one of its subscribers, if that subscriber has agreed to indemnify another person against that person’s own negligence. The one exception to this is if the indemnity has been granted under a “Mutual Aid Agreement” which has been approved by the MIA.

Two issues arise: (1) it must be confirmed that the MIA has approved the agreement; and (2) the indemnity for “wilful” conduct (which is different than negligence) may still fall outside of the MIA’s coverage or put this provision (and the agreement) offside of the MIA’s policies.

Fire Services Contracts

1. Electoral Area “B” (Revelstoke area)

No copy of this agreement was provided by CSRD staff.

2. Rural Sicamous/District of Sicamous

The agreement does not clearly indicate the range of services being offered in the coverage area (is it limited to fire suppression, or does it include other services as well?).

The agreement should specifically define the powers of the Fire Chief from the District of Sicamous (the “SFC”) within the coverage area. It also should stipulate who is responsible for fire investigations and fire reports, and whether the SFC is to be appointed the LAFC for the area.

There likely should be a provision dealing with what happens in the event that the “budgeted sum” is either exceeded or under spent. There also should be a specific acknowledgment from the District of Sicamous of the maximum tax rate in effect for the specified area. With respect to the “additional charges” provided under section 3(b), the parties should likely agree a set of costs or charges that would be applicable.

On a specific note, there is a typographical error in section 2(c): the word “affect” should read “effect”.

3. Kault Hill

The Kault Hill agreement is the most detailed of the agreements reviewed. In general, it provides a good model for such arrangements.

The agreement requires in section 8 that the Salmon Arm Fire Chief be appointed the LAFC in the area, and, in section 5, that he be granted by bylaw certain powers in relation to controlling a fire, controlling the fire scene and effecting investigations or

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inquiries. These powers are broader than those provided for under the Operational Criteria Bylaw and it is not clear whether these provisions have been satisfied by the CSRD.

The agreement provides for only a limited response to “wildland/urban interface” fires, which leaves the CSRD still responsible for dealing this problem. This issue should be included as a matter for consideration by the Fire Services Co-ordinator.

In section 20 of the “cost” provisions, there is a reference to a 10% “penalty” payable in certain circumstances. Penalty provisions are generally not enforceable under contract law.

The indemnity section (s. 21) needs to be reviewed and reconsidered. The actual intent of the section is unclear, except that there will be no indemnification for “negligence or fault”. The wording of the provision is essentially circular, and it is difficult to determine for whose benefit it would apply.

It should be noted that the agreement cannot be terminated during its term. Termination is only possible at the end of the term, and then with not less than six months’ prior notice. If a termination notice is not served, the agreement automatically renews for a further five year term.

Other Fire Service Contracts

1. North Okanagan

The Rancho/Deep Creek fire department provides fire suppression services under contract to a specified area in the Regional District of the North Okanagan.

The agreement should include a provision specifying the powers of the Rancho fire chief when responding to an incident in the North Okanagan. It also should include language (as is found in the Sicamous agreement) about the level of service and (as is found in the Salmon Arm Agreement) right of the Rancho fire chief to control all operational decisions. Responsibility for issues such as fire investigations and fire reporting should be provided for as well.

If possible, it also would be wise to get a general indemnity against claims (other than for the CSRD’s own negligence) for providing services under the agreement.

2. North Bay (Tappen) Indian Reserve (the “Reserve”):

Under this agreement, the Tappen/Sunnybrae department has agreed to supply fire protection services to the Reserve. The terms of the Operational Criteria bylaw are specifically incorporated as part of the agreement. The agreement should provide that it is this bylaw, as amended or replaced from time to time in the sole discretion of the CSRD, that applies. A general statement as to “service level” and liability for supplying service also should be made (as in the Sicamous Agreement and the Little Shuswap agreement discussed below).

3. Little Shuswap Indian Band Servicing Agreement

This agreement covers only the properties owned by non-members of the Band. There are no limitations of liability or early termination provisions in the agreement. The Operational Criteria bylaw (as amended/replaced from time to time) should be incorporated by reference. The CSRD should be entitled to terminate the service if it decides generally to terminate the service in the general area that it is being offered.

22. Schedule K: Tax Rate Comparisons and Calculations

****NOTE:** This Information has been revised with Staff input.

2008 Figures without Capital Expenditures			
Fire Suppression Area	Converted Assessments	2008 budget without Capital**	Actual 2008 tax rate
Anglemont	\$41,150,132	\$92,066	\$0.394
Celista	\$29,466,104	\$112,937	\$0.485
Eagle Bay	\$44,165,289	\$106,991	\$0.274
Falkland	\$12,782,953	\$117,112	\$1.137
Malakwa	\$10,225,144	\$67,552	\$0.725
Nicholson	\$14,815,068	\$79,676	\$0.921
Ranchero	\$18,465,809	\$77,204	\$0.619
Scotch Creek	\$55,594,125	\$175,475	\$0.309
Silver Creek	\$ 9,714,778	\$98,357	\$1.174
Sorrento/Blind Bay	\$125,200,052	\$327,830	\$0.334
Swansea Pt	\$15,438,630	\$71,968	\$0.675
Tappen	\$32,215,256	\$104,721	\$0.409
White Lake	\$8,997,098	\$146,499	\$1.625
TOTALS	\$418,230,438	\$1,578,388	
COMBINED TAX RATE	\$ 0.3774		
**Includes combined contribution to Reserves (in 2008) of:		\$ 380,000	

	Actual 2008 Tax Rate	Tax rate difference (Actual vs Combined)
Anglemont	\$0.394	-\$0.017
Celista	\$0.485	-\$0.108
Eagle Bay	\$0.274	\$0.103
Falkland	\$1.137	-\$0.759
Malakwa	\$0.725	-\$0.348
Nicholson	\$0.921	-\$0.544
Ranchero	\$0.619	-\$0.242
Scotch Creek	\$0.309	\$0.068
Silver Creek	\$1.174	-\$0.797
Sorrento/Blind Bay	\$0.334	\$0.043
Swansea Pt	\$0.675	-\$0.297
Tappen	\$0.409	-\$0.032
White Lake	\$1.625	-\$1.247

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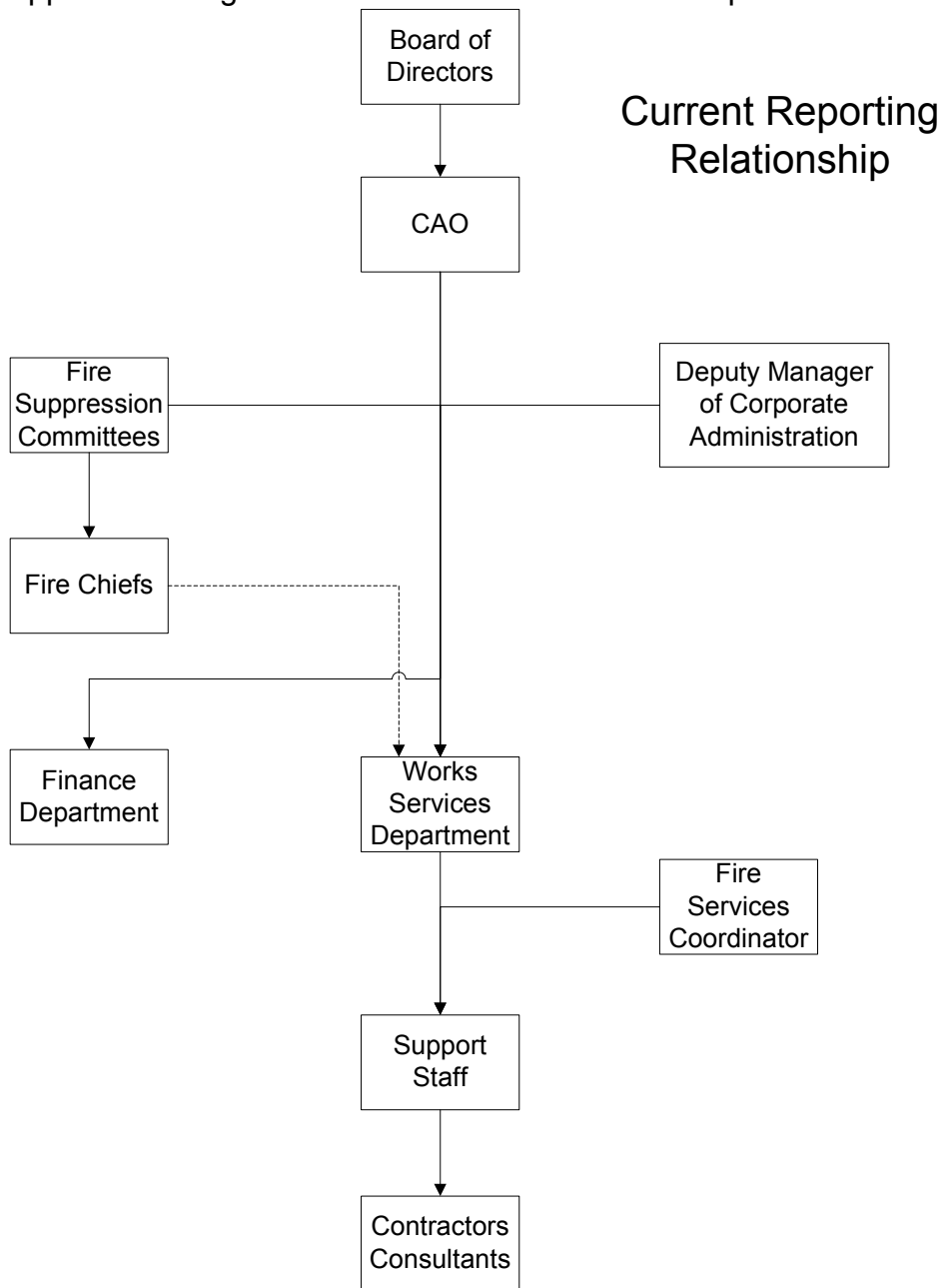
Tax Cost of Generating Additional Reserves

Increasing combined tax rate by:	will generate additional reserves in the amount of:
\$0.01	\$41,823
\$0.02	\$83,646
\$0.03	\$125,469
\$0.04	\$167,292
\$0.05	\$209,115
\$0.06	\$250,938
\$0.07	\$292,761
\$0.08	\$334,584
\$0.09	\$376,407
\$0.10	\$418,230

Actual Impact on Average Taxes:

	Average Residential Assessment	Actual average 2008 residential tax	2008 combined tax would have been	Difference for the average residential property
Anglemont	\$216,309.00	\$85.00	\$81.64	-\$3.36
Celista	\$408,227.00	\$208.00	\$154.06	-\$53.94
Eagle Bay	\$437,305.00	\$126.00	\$165.04	\$39.04
Falkland	\$214,742.00	\$244.00	\$81.04	-\$162.96
Malakwa	\$170,829.00	\$130.00	\$64.47	-\$65.53
Nicholson	\$226,781.00	\$209.00	\$85.59	-\$123.41
Ranchero	\$292,507.00	\$191.00	\$110.39	-\$80.61
Scotch Creek	\$464,562.00	\$144.00	\$175.33	\$31.33
Silver Creek	\$223,444.00	\$262.00	\$84.33	-\$177.67
Sorrento/Blind Bay	\$347,467.00	\$116.00	\$131.13	\$15.13
Swansea Pt	\$461,049.00	\$311.00	\$174.00	-\$137.00
Tappen	\$383,081.00	\$165.00	\$144.57	-\$20.43
White Lake	\$309,879.00	\$530.00	\$116.95	-\$413.05

Appendix L: Organization Charts—Current and Proposed



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Proposed
Reporting
Relationship

