

June 5, 2020

20-22 (updated 3:30pm June 5, 2020)

For Immediate Release

## CRD ends grants for assistance to independent fire departments

After receiving a legal opinion highlighting the regional district's exposure to legal risks with regard to grants for assistance, the CRD has made the difficult decision to deny current funding requests from five independent volunteer firefighting organizations in the region, and establish a board policy against grants for assistance to all independent fire departments within the district. The new approach does not have an impact on the 14 volunteer fire departments (17 fire halls) currently operating as CRD funded and managed organizations.

"This was a hard decision, and our board thought long and hard before taking this step," explains CRD CAO John MacLean. "Given the totality of the information we have received we felt we would be putting the district and its taxpayers at risk if we maintained the status quo."

The Cariboo Regional District sought advice and direction from other Regional Districts looking at similar circumstances, its legal advisors, and the Office of the Fire Commissioner before reaching its decision.

The decision was made largely because of the ten halls' legal status. Three are unincorporated societies and seven are incorporated societies. Both categories present legal and financial challenges for organizations such as the CRD. In particular, there are concerns that providing grants for assistance may be seen as tacit support for the independent departments. This leaves the regional district open to lawsuits if it is perceived as an 'authority having jurisdiction' - liable for actions taken by an independent volunteer fire department.

The ten fire departments impacted by the change are:

Big Lake Volunteer Fire/Rescue  
(unincorporated society)

Chimney/Felker Volunteer Fire Department  
(unincorporated society)

Tyee Lake Volunteer Fire Department  
(unincorporated society)

Greeny Lake Volunteer Fire Department  
(incorporated society)

Hawkins Lake Volunteer Firefighters Association  
(incorporated society)

Horsefly Volunteer Fire Department  
(incorporated society)

Likely and District Volunteer Fire and Rescue Society  
(incorporated society)

McLeese Lake Volunteer Fire Department Society  
(incorporated society)

Riske Creek Volunteer Fire Department Society  
(incorporated society)

Watch Lake-North Green Lake Volunteer Fire  
Department (incorporated society)

-30-

Media Contact:

Chris Keam, Manager of Communications

Cariboo Regional District

250-392-3351

[ckeam@cariboord.ca](mailto:ckeam@cariboord.ca)