

# BOARD REPORT

**TO:** Chair and Directors

**File No:** 7200 35 01

**SUBJECT:** Area B Fire Services Update

**DESCRIPTION:** Report from Darcy Mooney, Manager, Operations Management, dated October 17, 2017. Update on the negotiations with the City of Revelstoke regarding the Area B Fire Suppression Agreement.

**RECOMMENDATION #1:** THAT: the Board request the City of Revelstoke Council amend its resolution adopted at the December 6, 2016 Regular Council Meeting and extend the termination date for an additional 12 months to December 31, 2018 for the existing Fire Protection Service Agreement between the CSR and the City of Revelstoke, in order to provide time for the CSR to consult with Electoral Area B property owners within the Service Area and to review the outcome of the Area B South Revelstoke Diagnostic Inventory on Governance, Land Use and Service Delivery.

## SHORT SUMMARY:

During the regular Council meeting on December 6, 2016, the City of Revelstoke passed a resolution to give official notice to the CSR Board of its intent to terminate the Area B Fire Suppression Agreement effective December 31, 2017, in favour of negotiating a new updated agreement. Since this time CSR staff have attempted to negotiate a new Agreement in good faith. Staff are asking for Board support to request that the City of Revelstoke amend its resolution from a termination date of December 31, 2017 to December 31, 2018. This will give additional time for the CSR staff to consult with the property owners located in the Electoral Area B Fire Suppression Area, and to review the results of the Area B South Revelstoke Diagnostic Inventory Project, which is an analysis of governance, land use, and service delivery in the South Revelstoke area and outcomes of community consultation on future potential boundary extension. The Diagnostic Inventory Report is expected to be complete this fall, 2017.

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**VOTING:** Unweighted Corporate  LGA Part 14 (Unweighted)  Weighted Corporate  Stakeholder (Weighted)

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## BACKGROUND:

The Electoral Area B fire suppression agreement between the CSR and the City of Revelstoke (CoR) was initiated in 1980 and has remained unchanged since that time. The Area B Fire Suppression Service Area provides contracted fire suppression services from the CoR to approximately 250 properties located in Electoral Area B. On average over the past five years, the CoR responds to an average of less than five fire related calls per year to the service area. In 2015, the CSR identified to the CoR that this agreement be reviewed and modernized. In the spring of 2016, the CoR provided an initial draft Agreement to the CSR that focussed on the CoR's desire to provide a full scale hazard level of fire suppression response to Area B including first responder and road rescue services. A host of additional conditions were also outlined in the initial draft, including the implementation of a full scale building inspection service, a new water tender and other specialized equipment be supplied by the CSR.

At the regular Board meeting held in January 2017, the CSRD Board received notification from the CoR that the provision of fire services to Area B residents would terminate effective December 31, 2017. In the notification letter, the CoR identified the need to renegotiate the agreement with the CSRD in order to ensure that fire protection in Area B is continued. The letter also advised that it had appointed Fire Chief, Rob Girard, as the facilitator of the negotiations on behalf of the CoR.

In March 2017, the CSRD received an updated draft Fire Protection Agreement for Area B from the Fire Chief (drafted by their solicitor) which highlighted a number of areas of concern including:

- the need for a new 3000 gallon water tender and other specialized apparatus for calls related to the BC Hydro draw-down lands; and
- the current annual contract contributions from the service area to the CoR (approximately \$100,000 per year) were insufficient to meet the CoR's liabilities and a 12% premium to the contract rate would need to be levied.

CSRD staff reviewed the draft agreement and calculated that the increased costs based on the service upgrades requested by the CoR would exceed 160% over what property owners paid in previous years.

CSRD staff had productive and fruitful meetings with representatives of BC Hydro who are committed to finding and contributing towards a workable solution to fighting grass fires on the draw-down lands. CSRD staff also advanced alternative options for a new water tender including the utilization of available contract water haulers able to transport over 3000 gallons of water to a fire scene on short notice. These options were all part of a negotiation aimed to address the needs of both the CSRD and the CoR in attempts to avoid extremely high fixed and maintenance costs of expensive apparatus that would infrequently be required.

Since March 2017, CSRD staff has had multiple meetings with CoR staff, BC Hydro staff and the Area B Director with CoR Council, all in an attempt to develop a fair agreement that provides practical, efficient and affordable solutions for both parties.

On September 25, 2017 the CSRD received a letter from the CoR's solicitor rejecting the ideas advanced for discussion regarding alternatives to the purchase of a new water tender. The letter also stipulated that if the CSRD and the CoR do not have an agreement in place, including the supply of a water tender by December 31, 2017, the City will cease to provide fire services to Area B. This letter came as a complete surprise to CSRD staff who were attempting to negotiate in good faith with the CoR staff and had received assurance from the CoR's Committee of the Whole meeting on June 8, 2017 that services would not be arbitrarily withdrawn.

On October 13, 2017 a letter was received from the CoR Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Alan Chabot, directed to the CSRD Board asking for the Board to reject the recommendation contained in this report and to instruct CSRD staff to redouble its efforts to resolve the matter or inform the rural service area residents that as of midnight December 31, 2017 they will no longer have fire suppression service.

The CSRD understands that the supply of an additional water tender to the CoR fleet of fire apparatus would provide the property owners of the service area with the maximum level of response for efficiency and protection. The CSRD also recognizes that water tenders are costly to purchase and maintain, and from 1980 to present, the CoR has not required this additional equipment to provide Area B with protection. The Area B service area taxpayers have not capitalized or planned for this large purchase and, therefore, current capital dollars are not available.

**KEY ISSUES/CONCEPTS:**

CSRD staff has endeavoured to work collaboratively to provide practical and affordable solutions to help overcome the concerns addressed by the CoR. As a solution that is acceptable to both parties is yet to be determined, CSRD staff will need additional time to consult with the taxpayers within the Area B Fire Suppression Service Area regarding the options identified to date, including the potential substantial increase in taxes for the service. Furthermore, a diagnostic inventory project currently being conducted for South Revelstoke could recommended broad changes to the CoR/Area B boundary which will need consideration. Approximately one half of the Area B Fire Suppression Area is contained in the South Revelstoke Diagnostic project area.

**DESIRED OUTCOMES:**

The Board request the City of Revelstoke Council extend the existing agreement for an additional year (to December 31, 2018) in order to allow for consultation with the residents of Area B.

**Alternate Recommendation 1:**

The CSRD Board request that the CoR Council consider a new one or two year interim agreement that would have the CSRD provide for and implement a financial model to purchase a water tender over the longer term, and in the interim subsidize the CoR's water shuttling capability with the supply of contracted water hauling resources, and address apparatus needs in the BC Hydro draw-down lands.

**Alternate Recommendation 2:**

The CSRD Board direct staff to notify the property owners within the Area B fire suppression service area that the CSRD has received notice from the City of Revelstoke that effective December 31, 2017 fire suppression service will be terminated for the properties contained in the service area.

- Rationale for the Alternate Recommendation 2: Given the recent correspondence received from the CoR CAO on October 13, 2017, it appears that the City is not prepared to provide fire suppression to the Area B service area participants in the absence of an agreement and that the CSRD was unsuccessful in negotiating a fair, reasonable, and equitable service agreement.

**BOARD'S OPTIONS:**

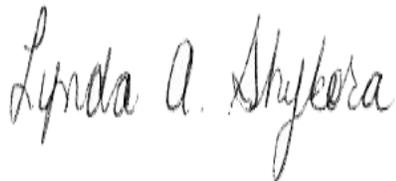
1. *Endorse the Recommendation.*
2. *Deny the Recommendation.*
3. *Defer.*
4. *Any other action deemed appropriate by the Board, such as Alternate Recommendation 1 or Alternate Recommendation 2, above.*

**LIST NAME OF REPORT(S) / DOCUMENT(S) AVAILABLE FROM STAFF:**

**Report Approval Details**

Document Title:	Area B Fire Suppression Agreement City of Revelstoke Update.docx
Attachments:	- ltr to csrd re rural fire - oct13-17.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 17, 2017

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



**Lynda Shykora - Oct 17, 2017 - 11:22 AM**



**Charles Hamilton - Oct 17, 2017 - 11:34 AM**