

VICTORIA FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

Local Seven Thirty
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

1234 YATES STREET E, VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA V8V 3M8



President

Vice President

Secretary

September 7, 2018

Paul Bruce
Fire Chief
Victoria Fire Department

Dear Chief Bruce,

Re: Council Motion of August 9, 2018

This letter is in response to your request for Local 730 to report back to you regarding a resolution passed by the City of Victoria Council. Specifically the 'effective coordination of volunteers with command structures and responsibilities of professional first responders in the Victoria Fire Department and other municipal, provincial and federal agencies.'

The Local would first like to take the opportunity to recognize the value in the Victoria Emergency Program volunteers. Local 730 understands the role volunteers would have assisting in a major event such as a catastrophic earthquake.

However, with respect to the coordination of volunteers with the command structure of professional first responders, Local 730 has some concerns that ultimately find us unable to support such a motion.

Currently the command structure in the Victoria Fire Department is one based on a high level of training, experience and seniority. The personnel that occupy these positions typically have a minimum of twenty years experience with the Department. This depth of experience and training creates strong familiarity and teamwork. Taking this degree of professionalism into consideration, Local 730 finds it hard to conceive that there would be an attempt to coordinate tactical or operational (USAR) volunteers within this structure. The Locals position is that trying to coordinate volunteers within this model would erode the effectiveness of the existing command structure regardless of the task. As a comparison, the police do not consider integration of their volunteer constables into any of their command roles.

With respect to trying to coordinate volunteers with the responsibilities of first responders, Local 730 also struggles with the effectiveness of this proposal. Victoria Fire Department First Responders are highly trained and skilled in fire and rescue. These attributes are accomplished

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through countless hours of training and responding to emergency calls together. It is hard for Local 730 to feature trying to coordinate a volunteer with professionals in this demanding role. It is the Local's position that volunteers would be coordinated in more a a peripheral role.

Another factor that does not directly impact the functions of the Department, but the Local believes needs to be taken into consideration is the physical and mental toll of exposing volunteers to events that professionals have chosen as part of their career. The Local, with the support of the Department, actively engages in maintaining mental health and awareness. The Local has a mental resilience program as well as a CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) program that is a support network for members experiencing the mental toll from the nature of our calls. The Local wants to ensure that Council is aware of what they are suggesting for volunteers and the potential long term effects.

The Local appreciates this opportunity to engage in this process that Council has put forward. We are hopeful that parties involved with this process appreciate the concerns addressed by Local 730.

Respectfully,

Rich Sulsbury
President
I.A.F.F Local 730

