

CREST presentation May 16, 2018

re: integrated fire dispatch

I am pleased to be here today.

My colleague Colin Neilson and I are two citizens at large with interests in municipal governance for our region and in particular where common needs of residents are regional in character and the advantages of *intermunicipal shared service delivery* transcend municipal boundaries. Examples are landfill, water supply and regional parks. And obviously emergency services require similar levels of partnership.

It is a pleasure to appear before CREST as you have members from all 13 municipalities, electoral areas and numerous agencies: some 50 members strong are demonstration of what is possible when you recognize your mutual interests in organizing to provide an essential public service that is to be organized, funded and delivered on an inter-municipal basis.

We understand that it has not been easy, and in the past difficulties have occurred with priority setting and selection of technology. But to your credit, you have persevered and today no one suggests we should dismantle this critical regional communication system between first responders.

Unfortunately, it appears that soon we will see **not a consolidation** of fire dispatch service, but instead a **fragmentation** as 5 municipalities choose to go out of the region for service.

Colin and I have appeared before Saanich Council and the CRD. Today, you are a separate group of community officials who we hope will go back to your local councils and provide leadership necessary to carefully consider options for structure and administration of fire dispatch services.

In past few weeks I have reviewed numerous reports and technical studies done for Saanich and for the CRD and find one simple universal recommendation....

“there is agreement among fire leaders that a consolidated fire dispatch service would lead to improved operational capacity and effectiveness within the region.”

Arguments in favor of single site dispatch includes reference to such factors as:

- *“decreased response time*

- *improved public safety*
- *enable “closest responder” etc.*

If that is true, I am troubled to find that 5 Councils have chosen to ignore advice of their professional staff and dismember the current system with three dispatch centres and leave the region. In doing so, their rationale seems to be to simply save money. That seems to be shortsighted. But worse, it seems that in the search for low hanging fruit it increases costs for those who those of you who remain in the system. At the same time those who leave also still want you to provide 'mutual aid'. So much for being good neighbours.

The validity of their argument, as the basis for their decision to leave, will be subject to public scrutiny when the CRD reviews the most recent cost comparison report for Planning and Protective Services Committee meeting on May 23.

The purpose of my presence is to simply increase your awareness of this issue and encourage you to ensure you are fully informed of all the facts. And to urge you to provide leadership within your own communities to argue the merits of the case for centralized (in region) **regional fire dispatch centre**. We solicit support for other elected officials to join with the CRD and CREST representatives from Sooke in their fervent support for regional fire dispatch.

My colleague Colin will now provide you with some of the details in comparing the cost of alternative ways to organize fire dispatch, and suggest that a search for short term savings will in fact not be in your best interests.

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