

Re: LETTER FROM THE UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MUNICIPALITIES THAT
APPEARED ON THE AGENDA FOR THE DECEMBER 1, 1975 MEETING OF COUNCIL (Item 4b)
THE KEENLEYSIDE REPORT ON FIRE FIGHTING SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Appearing on last week's Agenda was a request from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities for comments on the subject report which was prepared by Dr. H. L. Keenleyside for the Provincial Government. Following are comments on this matter from the Fire Chief and the Personnel Director.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT a copy of this report be sent to the U.B.C.M. Executive and it be requested to reflect the concerns and comments made by the Fire Chief and Personnel Director.

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Comments From the Fire Chief

General reaction to this report, throughout the fire service, was of a positive nature, and while the bulk of the 44 recommendations contained in the report require legislative action at the Provincial level, there is an obvious attempt to outline in general terms certain directions municipal, and/or regional governments (particularly in the lower mainland, and Capitol region areas) must take to rationalize the fire service.

The primary thrust of the report is to qualitatively alter and/or upgrade the Office of the Fire Marshal, and vest that Office with research, training, inspection, enforcement, and other fire related capabilities, and in our opinion, in this regard, Dr. Keenleyside has correctly opted for a centralization of authority, and control by a "B.C. Fire Commission", and a strengthened Fire Marshal.

We agree there must be a uniform standard set for training and equipment, and that the National Fire Code of Canada be the basic Provincial Code with authority for municipalities to make amendments, to cover particular local situations, clearly expressed. (It should be noted that Burnaby was the first municipality in British Columbia to adopt the National Fire Code as its fire by-law, and we have assisted and advised other municipalities who have subsequently adopted it).

The establishment of a Central Purchasing and Supply Centre together with a standardization of apparatus and equipment we feel would reduce the cost of equipment to a municipality, and availability of service facilities would cut "down time" of equipment requiring major repairs, and effect savings through elimination of shipping costs, specialized services, and personnel.

To ensure a competency standard for Fire Chiefs (recommendation #12), and a common standard through examination of firefighters would, to some degree, limit the discretionary powers of a municipality, however, in the long term would provide that each member from the Fire Chief down had met a proficiency standard for each step in advancement that would be universally recognized, and coupled with an apprenticeship program, and a training academy, would provide a professionalism that all members of the fire service desire.

It is our understanding that the Provincial Fire Marshal is recommending use of the International Fire Service Training Association Manuals as a desirable training standard (Burnaby has used these standards in part for several years), and the National Fire Prevention Association Code 1001 Firefighter Professional Qualifications as a standard for training new recruits will be used by this Department.

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It may be that the report is aimed primarily at outlining fire services throughout B.C., for which there are little or no internal training facilities available. However, in the event it is intended that municipalities, including the District of Burnaby, will be required to send their personnel to the College to ensure they meet certain standards of qualifications, it would be wise to ensure that the hidden costs of time loss are reckoned with before implementation.

D. F. Hicks
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PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

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