ITEM 9

MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 79

COUNCIL MEETING Dec. 8/75

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 competancy 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 desiroable 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.

ITEM 9

MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 79

COUNCIL MEETING Dec. 8/75

In summary the Keenleyside report covers the ambit of the fire service, and makes some strong recommendation which if acted upon will reverse the poor fire record of the Province, will provide a broader public awareness of fire danger, and provide the fire service with a strong central authority which is desperately required.

Most of the recommendations directed to local governments and departments have already been adopted, or were in the process of being implemented by this Department through policy and training with the result we find no conflict with the general thrust of the report and feel that there will be an eventual financial benefit to the municipality, and the taxpayer as a consequence of adoption by the Provincial Government.

W. F. Collum.

CHIEF OF FIRE DEPARTMENT.

WFC/mc

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER

DATE: DECEMBER 5, 1975

FROM: PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS PROPOSED BY DR. H.L. KEENLEYSIDE - "THE FIRE FIGHTING SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA"

The following general comments are forwarded on the subject report which appeared as a correspondence item on the Council Agenda dated December 1, 1975.

Most of the recommendations appear to have merit in varying degrees and a centralized setting of standards of training and effectiveness and the integration of a variety of fire services in separate local areas would appear to provide much better protection service to the public at less cost.

Some of the recommendations would appear to have hidden costs to municipalities. If the establishment of a "Fire College" involves the process of a Fire Department sending men to the College for, say, a week or several weeks of training, there may be expensive replacement costs for the municipality involved due to the time lost to the employees who are sent to the College.

The average compensation cost to the Municipality for firefighters in 1976 will be in the neighborhood of \$20,000. per man. The cost of an "on duty" shift will be approximately \$137. and the cost per hour will be approximately \$11.40. When a firefighter is taken from platoon strength he will have to be replaced at these rates or at overtime rates in order for the Fire Department to maintain their platoon strength. Therefore, the additional cost to a municipality of replacing a firefighter while he is attending the "Fire College" for a month of training would be in excess of \$2,000. This is simply the replacement cost of his "on duty" time and is exclusive of any costs associated with the College itself.

The report does not appear to recognize the fact that firefighters are presently being compensated on the basis that they have the qualifications required for their position. One of the basic qualifications of a firefighter is that he have some basic first-aid training in order to do his job and this is set out in his job specification and is a basis of the rate of pay for his position. However, the report appears to recommend that a firefighter who learns basic first aid should get some sort of bonus in addition to his present compensation.

ITEM 9
MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 79
COUNCIL MEETING Dec. 8/75

- 2 -

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
PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

DFH:mg