



# DIRECTOR REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: DR-BRD-016

From: Leonard Hiebert, Director

Date: March 11, 2021

**Subject: First Responder Tax Credit**

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## **PURPOSE / ISSUE:**

To forward a letter of support to the Prime Minister of Canada and Mr. MP Gord Johns from the Courtenay- Alberni area, regarding Bill C-264.

## **RECOMMENDATION / ACTION: [Corporate Unweighted]**

That the Regional Board authorize that a letter of support for Bill C-264, which will increase the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers from \$3,000 to \$10,000 per year, be forwarded to the Prime Minister of Canada and MP Gord Johns.

## **BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

On February 3, 2021, Courtenay-Alberni MP Gord Johns introduced a Private Member's Bill to the House of Commons that proposes increasing the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers from \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year. This equates to about \$450 per year under existing tax rules, or \$2.25 per volunteer hour worked.

The PRRD depends on volunteers to provide emergency services throughout the entire region. In Canada, volunteers account for 83% of the total firefighters, with a further 8,000 essential search and rescue volunteers who respond to thousands of incidents every year. These essential volunteers not only put their lives on the line and give their time, but they also allow municipalities and regional districts to keep property taxes lower than if fulltime paid services were required.

Canada's tax code currently allows volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers to claim a \$3,000 tax credit if 200 hours of volunteer services were completed in a calendar year. This works out to a mere \$450 per year. If they volunteer more than 200 hours, which many do, this tax credit becomes even less. Increasing this tax credit would allow these essential volunteers to keep more of their hard-earned money. It is likely to be spent in the communities in which they live, and it would also help retain these volunteers when volunteerism is decreasing.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:**

- ☒ Advocacy
- ☒ Emergency Response Capacity for Local Governments