

New Requirements - and Possible Changes - Ahead for the TIVFD

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This article follows up on my last Quarterly submission where I wrote about the new minimum training standards for firefighters in BC. These standards have been adopted by the province through the Fire Services Act and the Office of the Fire Commissioner. The TIID, as the local governing body, will need to determine the service levels that the community wants, is prepared to support and that our volunteer fire department can deliver.

Determining service levels is an important decision for the trustees of the Improvement District to make as it has long term consequences for residents of Thetis Island. We plan to have discussions and meetings with Islanders later this year to review service levels and the financial implications. In fact, as a community, we must first determine if we want to continue to have a volunteer fire department on Thetis. I think we do. To help me personally answer that question from a financial perspective only, I had my insurance agent give me a quote for my house insurance if we were deemed to be unprotected by Fire Underwriters. My annual home owners insurance would rise from about \$2500 per year to \$4800, an increase of \$2300 annually. We currently pay \$593 through our property taxes to support the operation of the fire department.

As residents, we have relied on a remarkable volunteer base that provides all islanders and visitors with a top notch fire department and first responder's service. This is no small feat. The challenge we face now is that meeting the new standards will cost money for training and equipment as well as a significant increase in volunteer time. Additionally, the trustees and senior fire department staff are legally responsible for meeting these standards. These new regulations can not be ignored or met only half way.

With that in mind, Improvement District trustees felt it would be important for residents to see what an alternative to the current model of local government might look like. To accomplish that Trustee Anderson, Chief Caldbeck and I met with senior staff of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD). We had a without prejudice exploratory discussion about the possibility of the CVRD taking over the operation of the TIVFD and dissolving the TIID. This is not to say that we are advocating the CVRD over local government. It is, however, important to know what that option might look like. It will be at least a couple of months before we complete our analysis, and are able to share any preliminary information.

Questions or comments please call or email and plan to attend the Improvement District's AGM on April 23rd at 10 AM. Forbes Hall