

December 2017 FINAL

### **My personal experiences with Fire Departments**

Most of us have busy schedules and we tend to only appreciate the services provided to us when we need them or after they respond to our personal needs. Our Fire Departments, or as we now call them our “Fire Rescue Services” because they provide more than putting out a fire, is a service that is silent until the need occurs.

In 1983 – my retail store in Golden, BC had a major fire which totalled our building and inventory. Fortunately, our Fire Insurance allowed us to re-build and re-open on the same property.

On December 26, 1980 (Boxing Day) – my retail store and warehouse in Cranbrook burned to the ground – A TOTAL LOSS of about 24,000 square feet and over \$2 million. I was in Creston when the fire occurred and a friend drove me to Cranbrook at 3AM. The entire building and all the inventory was gone. We were fortunate to re-open in a rented building in 5 business days after the fire. The major reason being that I was a member of VIP Stores Ltd. with a membership of about 40 dealers in western Canada and individual members supplied us with semi-trailers of appliances, electronics and furniture in 5 days. Also we were insured with ICBC and they presented me with an initial cheque for \$400,000 within 30 days of our fire. However, the hardest task was being treated as a “suspect” by the local RCMP and the BC Provincial Fire Commissioners office instead of as a “victim” for a few days while they investigated the cause. This attitude of suspicion changed once they completed their investigation and determined the cause to be “electrical”!

In January 1977, my mother’s house on 20<sup>th</sup> Ave North had a major fire and was eventually re-built. I was living in Cranbrook and oversaw the clean-up, fire insurance settlement and the rebuilding of her home.

On June 12, 2017 at 8AM, my sister who was visiting our mother phoned me after she had called 911 in a huge panic, I was in my town hall office and 3 minutes later I arrived at our mother’s house to see “Engine21 with red lights flashing” in front of her house. When I entered my mother’s bedroom, 3 firefighters were tending to my mother who at age 92 was unresponsive. I was very relieved that these guys were present and doing their utmost to revive my mother. I must explain that there was no Ambulance on scene because “car #1” was responding to a call already and “car#2” arrived about 20 minutes after I had. I am so very proud of our Firefighter WEP (Work Experience Program) and their presence. Last year our Creston Fire Rescue responded to over 500 calls and about 300 were “First Responder (medical) Calls” to assist our BC Ambulance Service.

My personal experiences over the years and my 9 years as your Mayor has given me a great appreciation that being prepared and trained when called upon is about strategic planning for future calls, fires and disasters. We have about 40 volunteer firefighters who train once a week to serve each of you when the alarm goes out. Our Creston Valley Regional Fire Services has another 40 plus volunteers who volunteer and train and serve as well.

A new Fire Hall for Creston and the Creston Valley will provide our volunteers, and each of you as home owners and business owners, with the comfort knowing that if that “one day” occurs when you have a Fire Rescue need, they will respond!

Don't hesitate to contact me by:

Visiting me at my office in Town Hall

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