



November 12, 2019

To the Grant Review Committee:

Please accept this letter of support from the Texada Island Chamber of Commerce, with respect to the grant application from the Gillies Bay and Van Anda Fire Departments to access training funds.

Texada Island's fire departments' personnel are volunteers. Receiving this highly-important grant will be key to having the financial means to train our island's firefighters. Our firefighters need training to help them feel more secure in facing dangerous situations and it will no doubt enhance their capacity to minimize damage to property and save lives, including possibly their own.

Having qualified fire department personnel is an important consideration for protecting businesses, for attracting new residents, and for reassuring all residents who call Texada Island home.

Texada businesses have experienced devastating fire situations that have gravely impacted our island's economy and identity. When one business closes due to fire, such as in the case of the Texada Island Inn fire in 2016, it has negative spill-out effects in our community. In that example, all of our island's hotel rooms became immediately unavailable to tourists, which adversely impacted the Inn's bottom line but also minimized tourist income dollars at our grocery stores and at other local businesses. The Inn is also a location used for many community non-profit group meetings, such as our Chamber of Commerce Dinner Forums. We have very few 'public' buildings for meetings, so all efforts to minimize fire damage to them are vitally-necessary to Texada's community services.

As well, when building materials are required to repair fire damage, many of those materials are not available on our island. Material, travel time, and in some cases, off-island labour costs are increased hardships for our businesses and residents by having to get most things from off-island via ferry. If training can help our firefighters contain fires more efficiently and quickly, those repair costs could be minimized.

Being situated on a remote/rural island, means that we face barriers to accessing any potentially-needed additional fire department assistance from off-island surrounding communities. This means that our fire department volunteers need all the training they can get as they are likely our only line of defense. As your committee is reviewing its decisions, please review how many grants you award to isolated islands. It is our hope that this grant request is made a priority among the many applicants.

On behalf of our Chamber, I ask that you grant the funding requested by the Gillies Bay and Van Anda Fire Departments.

Thank you,  
Cindy Babyn  
President  
Texada Island Chamber of Commerce