



March 27, 2023

Mayor and Council
City of Courtenay
c/o C Dallamore
Legislative Coordinator

Dear Mayor and Councilors:

RE: Request from CVSAR for more information

On March 22, 2023, Comox Valley Search and Rescue (CVSAR) attended your Council meeting to request 2 items:

1. Recognition of CVSAR members as first responders in our own right.
2. A without cost allocation of a piece of land to support the building of a new home for CVSAR

I have attached the follow-up information requested by the Mayor and Council.

CVSAR has served the Comox Valley and surrounding area for the past 50 years. In that time, we have performed almost 1100 search and rescues. Our call-out rate (number of times we get requests to search and or rescue people) makes us the busiest team on Vancouver Island.

We have 50 years of data but rather than inundate you with data we have chosen to provide data for the last 11 years.

In addition, you will see that our requests for help have been trending upwards, especially during the Covid years, except for 2022, where numbers declined slightly, not just in the Comox Valley, but across the province. It is not known whether this will continue or is just an anomaly.

YEAR	TOTAL
2012	40
2013	25
2014	31
2015	41



2016	54
2017	47
2018	65
2019	59
2020	72
2021	76
2022	57

2012-2022 567

Our search and rescues comprise general ground search and rescues (including urban searches, dementia and despondent people); rope rescues, avalanche search and rescues; water rescues (particularly on the Puntledge, Brown, Tsolum and Courtenay Rivers); medical rescues; hoist (helicopter) rescues; body recoveries. We have also done several dog rescues and even horse rescues.

Medical rescues have increased 19% over the past 10 years. Of the 9 call-outs, since January 1, 2023, 4 of them were in the urban setting.

Our numbers are obviously smaller than those of the local fire department but our volunteers respond to requests from the RCMP, BC Ambulance Service, the Coroner's office, and the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre mainly in hard to access locations. We are no less certified or trained than any volunteer fire department – our training focusses on different skills.

OTHER COMMUNITIES HELP TO FIND A BUILDING LOCATION

CVSAR is the only SAR team on Vancouver Island not housed on public lands.

CVSAR is the only SAR team on Vancouver Island that pays rent for its base of operations and that rent is going to be approximately \$80,000 in the coming year.

The annual cost of rent and efforts to fundraise are hobbling CVSAR's operational readiness.

You have tasked us to apply to other levels of government. As explained at the presentation we are doing that. Ground search and rescue is a provincial and territorial responsibility, not Federal. We have



attempted to access provincial funds but due to current building costs and Comox Valley land values, CVSAR is not eligible for Provincial Capital Gaming Grants (capital gaming applications cannot exceed \$1.25M for the whole project, regardless of location in B.C.).

We hope that all the municipalities and the regional district can pull together to help us achieve our goal of a new building.

The City of Courtenay is situated in the centre of these communities and has at least one parcel that meets the criteria outlined:

1. Size of parcel 1 -1.5 acres
2. Good access to the river, Hwys 19 and 19A, the air park (helicopter access) and all points in between (the urban settings)
3. Good services including internet and radio (siting to repeaters for hard to access radio dead zones)

Other municipalities and regional districts in the province have funded buildings and land through alternative funding models, the model that you use to fund fire halls. This process was approved by the UBCM and government several years ago to also use this model to fund search and rescue halls. This is one way of supporting CVSAR to access land and/or a building. We cannot raise enough money to both buy land and construct a building.

Thank you for your time last Wednesday, we are hoping for a positive response from you regarding land in the City of Courtenay which meets our criteria.

Bronwen Beedle

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Treasurer

Comox Valley Search and Rescue