



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
**SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

Thursday, November 7, 2019

<u>PAGE NO.</u>	<u>CORRESPONDENCE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
2-13	<b>The First Responders Café Society – Request for Funding</b> (to accompany Delegation on Committee of the Whole Agenda)	<b>Receive</b>

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

## **THE FIRST RESPONDERS CAFÉ SOCIETY**

### **REQUEST FOR FUNDING**

#### **Who we are:**

The First Responders Café Society, is Registered under the British Columbia Non-profit Societies Act. Registration #S0068809 and governed by a board of 7 Directors made up of local professional community members, with representatives from Police, Fire Services, EHS, and Industry. With two members at large from the medical community, Dr. Lorne Cairn, and Dr. Shannon Douglas. Each, serving 2 year term who have a great concern for the health and wellbeing of our First Responders and their families throughout the northern communities of British Columbia?

In spite of the many resources available to help First Responders in larger communities and cities, Many First Responders in Smaller northern communities also struggle with issues of Depression, anxiety, isolation, Hyper vigilance, and addiction, IE; Gambling, alcohol and or drugs. Two Prevalent issues often misdiagnosed with many First Responders are Compassion Fatigue, a common reaction to a traumatic experience, which mirrors some of the symptoms of PTSD but not all. Compassion fatigue can lead not only to poor job performance, but also Depression, excessive drinking, panic attacks, and flashbacks. Burnout- Syndrome is also commonly experienced by First Responders and is defined as a combination of “overwhelming exhaustion” feelings of cynicism and detachment to job, producing a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishments.

These two prevalent issues can have a significant impact on families, in particular to children and spouse. Added to this, the chances are, that most first responders in smaller communities will know personally who is involved in incident, relative, friend, neighbor, own children, or student. This alone can produce pre-stress while responding to a call.

### **Purpose of Society:**

A.)To provide a safe, confidential setting in each of the Northern Communities where First Responders can come together on a weekly basis to share their experience, strength, and hope with one another, and provide peer to peer support and encouragement to other members, and their families.

These groups are not therapy sessions, but they are extremely therapeutic. (Referrals to professional services are available.)

B.)To provide interactive workshops, and presentations on effects of PTSD, Compassion Fatigue, Burnout syndrome, depression, anxiety, and addiction.

C.)To promote and coordinate family activities, camp-outs, Barbecues, other family orientated activities.

### **Canadian Facts and Figures:**

First Responders experience PTSD and OSI 4 times the rate of the general public. An estimated 22% of all paramedics will develop PTSD.

### **From 2014 to 2018 First Responders lost to suicide in Canada;**

24 Corrections Officers, 33 Fire Service Personnel, 62 Paramedics.

64 members of the Police, 63 Veterans.

### **In British Columbia.**

2015, 3 Paramedics, 4 Firefighters, 2 Police, 1 corrections officer.

2016, 19 First Responders died from Suicide, 7 Paramedics, 7 Police officers, 4 Firefighters, 1 Correctional officer.

2017, 20 First Responders Committed Suicide.

2018, 22, 7 Police officers, 7 Paramedics, 4 Firefighters, 2 dispatchers, 2 retired.

**2019, to date: In B.C., 8 Paramedics/Dispatchers, 9 Police/Correctional officers, 5 Firefighters. (22)**

These numbers represent the “Ones Reported.” It has been stated by a number of universities that these numbers above represent only 10% of actual number reported. Mainly due to stigma associated with mental illness.

Simon Fraser University estimate at least 40 % of first Responders will suffer from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) or OSI. (Occupational Stress Injury)

## **Background and History**

In January 2018 The First Responder (Volunteer) Coordinator contacted Fire Services, RCMP, EMS Search and rescue, and emergency room personnel to discuss the idea of forming a peer support group in our community of Burns Lake. There were 24 people attending at the local Fire hall. We have gained support from Provincial Government sponsored programs, Search and Rescue, Fire Chief, Northern Health, Mobile Response Team, Medical Profession and other concerned citizens (See support letters included) The Burns Lake group has been meeting on a weekly basis with an average attendance of 5 with as many as 7 attending.

This is a confidential group and anyone wishing to attend will contact group facilitator, who will then meet with the person usually over coffee, where a decision is made based on legitimacy and sincerity of request, the location of group meeting is revealed. To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the members we use first names only. Confidentiality is maintained within the groups, and only signs of immediate danger with a member, appropriate Fire Chief, Unit Chief, detachment commander, SAR coordinator In charge will be notified.

Donations from community members and businesses have helped with Incorporation of society, group room rental, refreshments pamphlets, workshop cost, and travel expenses. In the last 4 months we have had requests from a number of Communities to assist in starting up peer support groups.

As requested, I have made 3 visits to Telkwa/Smithers B.C. and assisted in starting a group, they have formed a committee of 9 First Responders, located a facility and started a support group with 6 to 9 First Responder members attending by-weekly. Over the past year I have traveled to Smithers, Telkwa, Fort St James, Fraser Lake, Houston, Topley, Gran Isle, Fort Fraser, Vanderhoof, and Prince George. I have spoken with many First Responders Including Members of RCMP, Fire Services, Paramedics, Emergency Service providers, and Corrections officers. Recently spoke at Volunteer Fire Chiefs dinner in P.G. with Chiefs (24) from numerous communities from McBride, Quesnel, Ft St. James, Hixon, Pine view, Beverley, and Mackenzie. Who all support the First Responders Café project? I have met with Shirley Bond, Mike Morris, John Rustad, and Nathan Cullen who are also concerned with the increase in First Responder Suicides in our Province and we have their support in moving forward. I have met with Fire Dept. officials, RCMP, and EMS from all communities from Smithers to Prince George over the last 6 months and all support the idea of having local peer support groups.

Campbell River Fire Chief Thomas Doherty Represented B.C. in Ottawa at the Fire Chiefs conference, stated that; more immediate interim measures be put into place for all First Responders.

Upon submission of our proposal to the provincial government, with thanks to John Rustad, we have received a portion (\$10,000) of requested budget, to hire a part time coordinator, to oversee the project and provide training to identify volunteer group leaders. We have been overwhelmed by calls from communities, as to when we could visit and continue with support and training as requested.

We are asking for your support in obtaining funding to provide this much needed resource for the First Responders and emergency service providers in the Northern communities. We are hopeful that data collected, project evaluation reports, and a reduction in numbers of suicides with First Responders will justify long term funding from both Federal and Provincial Governments.

Our mission is, hopefully to “stem the tide” of this increasing number of suicides with our first responders. To help alleviate some of the pressure presently being placed on our already overwhelmed mental health resources. With sometimes long waiting list, and the fear of being (written up) some have given up seeking professional help. We hope to help reduce the Stigma associated with Mental Health. I have heard the concerns of a number of members, who have approached a supervisor having difficulty with an issue, and were told to (Just suck it up, go home have couple beers and get over it). We believe those “Suck it up” days are over. In order to keep the momentum going, we need funding necessary to complete our mission, of providing support to these northern communities, and assisting with basic group facilitating skills, building a confidential and safe environment of trust and open communication amongst our First Responders.

We see this as a cost effective means to hopefully reduce the number of suicides, provide a service to First Responders locally where travel to larger cities away from family in some cases may not be necessary.

There are many peer to peer groups operating in several provinces of Canada, such as OSI-Can, Badge of life, boots on the ground, and others, with extremely positive outcomes.

See proposed budget next page.

## Proposed Budget:

Hire Part-Time coordinator: (Starting Immediately)

20 hrs a week x 52 wks. @\$40.00 per hour, (Contract)	\$41,600
Capital Cost Laptop/Printer	2400
Travel:	
Mileage 15000 KLMS @ .50 per KLM	7500
Accommodation 32 nights @140.00	4480
Meal Allowance @ \$65.00 per day x 46	3990
Start- up refreshment nutrition breaks	1200
Pamphlets/Brochures/Printing/copying	2500
	<b>Sub-Total <u>\$63,670</u></b>
Administration cost @10%	6,367
<b>Total annual operating cost of project.</b>	<b><u>\$70,037</u></b>
Received from Provincial Government March 30 <sup>th</sup> . 2019	\$10,000
	<b>Balance requested <u>\$60,037</u></b>

Respectfully Submitted by;

Ron J. Blinn Volunteer Project Coordinator  
 Mental Health & Addiction Counselor.  
 Community Program Developer

Cell; 250-251-1653

Email; ronbren@telus.net

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**Bulkley Valley Critical Incident Response Team (BVCIRT)**  
**% Northern Society for Domestic Peace**  
**Box 3739, Smithers, BC**  
**V0J2X0**

October 10, 2018

To Whom it May Concern;

The Bulkley Valley Critical Incident Response Team has been operating for 25 years in the Bulkley Valley and surrounding area. We have a highly trained team of volunteer crisis responders that are available for first responders, industry, businesses and civilians who have been affected by threat to life or loss of life. While we provide critical incident debriefing, defusing, referrals, information and education to a wide variety of residents and agencies, we see a need for a 1st Responder Cafe initiative in the north. We believe mental wellness and post traumatic growth and resiliency can be dependant on peer support, human connection and psychosocial education. Post traumatic stress disorder and critical incident stress are considered indicators in suicidal ideation among first responders and civilians.

Please see the TEMA.ca website that captures the impact of PTSD on first responders.  
<https://www.tema.ca/inthenews>

The 1st Responder Cafe - Burns Lake chapter representative is Ron Blinn. He has been helping us to organize a Smithers chapter. He has traveled several times to our community and provided insight and information about forming our chapter. We have great interest and representation from BC Ambulance, Telkwa Fire Department, Smithers RCMP and the Provincial Mobile Response Team on our advisory. However, there are no funds to support the community and regional work that needs to be done for our 1st Responders.

A Northern Regional 1st Responder Coordinator would be instrumental in our success. Please consider funding this important initiative.

Respectfully,

Debora Chatfield  
Program Coordinator  
BVCIRT  
250-643-2241



NORTHERN SOCIETY FOR  
DOMESTIC PEACE

3772 1st Ave., P.O. Box 3836  
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

Tel. 250-847-9000 • Fax 250-847-8911  
Email: info@domesticpeace.ca  
www.domesticpeace.ca

The First Responders Café Society  
Peer Support Group  
C/O Ron Blinn

RE: Letter of Support

I am writing on behalf of the Northern Society for Domestic Peace in support of an application for funding by the First Responder Café. The society is led by Ron Blinn who has a passion for helping first responders who suffer from operational stress injuries. The First Responders Café is requesting additional funding to hire a coordinator for Northern BC. The coordinator will develop peer support groups in surrounding communities and host workshops on mental health and wellness. Due to the cost associated to travelling to major centres, many first responders and other service providers in the north do not have access to training opportunities.

Our agency has a history of helping first responders and is well aware of the distinct lack of resources in the north. Evidence exists that social supports positively impact first responder's mental health. Prati and Pietrantonio (2010) completed a meta-analysis that showed that social support is related to the mental health among first responders. The results of this study suggest that interventions aimed at increasing social support among first responders may also promote their well-being. Similarly, Charuvasta and Cloitre (2008) completed a meta-analysis and found a relationship between social support and the recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder. The results showed that positive social experiences can reduce post-traumatic fear responses, whereas socially negative or even neutral social experiences can heighten and maintain fear responses.

By forming partnerships and collaborating with other service providers, we strengthen our small communities. Communities have a responsibility to care for their first responders. The First Responders Café Society has the capacity to deliver a much-needed service in the north.

Carol Seychuk  
Executive Director  
Northern Society of Domestic Peace

Prati, G., & Pietrantonio, L. (2010). The relation of perceived and received social support to mental health among first responders: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Community Psychology, 38*(3), 403-417.

Charuvastra, A., & Cloitre, M. (2008). Social bonds and posttraumatic stress disorder. *Annual Review of Psychology, 59*, 301-328.





Lakes Omineca Medical Director  
 511 Reid Street, Quesnel BC V2J 2M8 Phone: 250-985-5577  
 Fax: 250-992-5652

November 7, 2018

To Whom it May Concern,

First responders are the backbone of emergency services in our small rural communities. These brave men and women work to the top of their scope of practice to provide excellence in often very challenging situations. Never was this reality more exposed than with the Babine Forest Products sawmill explosion in 2012. We called on their expertise to transport victims of this horrifying explosion, at night in the bitter cold of winter, secure safe access, manage the damage and retrieve the deceased. It is not unexpected that this kind of trauma would impact all those involved.

Our first responders manage trauma and difficult situations on every shift. From motor vehicle accidents to suicidal teenagers to families devastated by domestic violence to critical illness, our First Responders bear witness to suffering and trauma every day. They use all their training and skills to intervene, protect the safety of the individuals and their community. No one is not impacted by the performance of their duty and no one is prepared for the impact of repeated exposure to these traumatic situations. Compassion fatigue, post-traumatic stress disorder and vicarious traumatization are significant and negatively impact the personal health of our providers. This impact is finally being recognized and management strategies are being developed.

The First Responders Cafe offers a space for peer to peer support for those impacted by work place trauma. It is a safe space, anonymous, free of ego, where humanity is valued. Too many of our First Responders suffer with the burden of their work. They feel isolated. Their families suffer. They leave our communities. They suffer with mental illness, addiction and are at risk of suicide. The First Responders Cafe offers support and options.

I am very pleased to provide this letter of support for the First Responders Café Society. Health and wellness in care teams is a keen personal interest of mine. Far too many individuals suffer with the impact of bearing witness and being repeatedly exposed to trauma. Peer to peer support is an important component of wellness. The First Responders Cafe is an impressive, passion-driven endeavour to support our First Responders impacted by the work they do so well. It offers a venue to those impacted who do not wish to reach out to traditional medical illness models of support.

The Northern Interior Rural Division (NIRD) has been proud to provide seed funding for the First Responders Cafe Society in Burns Lake. In the short time that it has been operational, there has already been a positive impact with the individuals attending. We are supportive of their request for ongoing funding to support this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shannon Douglas  
 Chair Representative Assembly  
 Northern Interior Rural Division



23/05/2018

**First Responders Café Society**  
PO Box 98  
Burns Lake BC V0J 1E0

**Attention: Deborah Goble**

Dear Ms. Goble:

**RE: First Responders Café Society**

On behalf of Village of Burns Lake Council, I would like to provide this letter of support to the First Responders Café Society for fundraising efforts. This group provides first responders with the support needed in order to overcome any difficulties they may be facing due to on the job stresses. The confidential environment that this group provides encourages members from a variety of Task Forces to feel comfortable sharing experiences in a judgement free environment, with their peers.

'Compassion Fatigue' and 'Burnout Syndrome' are two commonly misdiagnosed conditions that First Responders experience. The First Responders Café Society aims to help with the associated negative effects on the families of the first responders, and for the first responders themselves.

Council agrees that the First Responders Café Society provides invaluable support for local first responders and feels that this society enhances the quality of life for first responders and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Beach".

Chris Beach  
Mayor



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

*Todd Doherty*

Member of Parliament  
Cariboo—Prince George

November 1, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

**RE: The First Responders Café Society**

I am pleased to provide this letter of support and endorsement for The First Responders Café Society.

The First Responders Café Society program connects First Responders and their families to counselling services, as well as providing mental health support when needed.

First Responders put their lives at risk every time they answer a call for help in our communities. I am a tireless advocate for our First Responders, and with groups such as these, it gives them a chance to support each other as well as provide support for others. With continued funding, The First Responders Café Society can continue to develop and expand programs both in our community and other Northern communities. I am confident that with the appropriate resources, the First Responders Café Society program will be able to continue the important work they do.

As the Member of Parliament for Cariboo-Prince George, I fully support the efforts of The First Responders Café Society as they continue to seek funding. I fully support the vision that The First Responders Café Society has set forward with these resources and see it as an important component in meeting the needs for all First Responders and their families in the north, including those in my riding and surrounding communities.

Thank you for your consideration. If further clarification is required, I would be pleased to respond.

Respectfully,

Todd Doherty, M.P.  
Cariboo – Prince George

*Ottawa Office*

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Tel.: 613-995-6704 Fax.: 613-996-9850  
Todd.Doherty@parl.gc.ca

*Constituency Office*

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Tel.: 250-564-7771 Fax.: 250-564-6224  
Todd.Doherty.C1@parl.gc.ca

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of BRITISH COLUMBIA



May 6, 2019,

To whom it may concern,

RE: The First Responders Cafe Society

I am pleased to provide a letter of support for The First Responders Café Society for ongoing funding to enable them to travel to a number of smaller communities, and assist in starting small support groups. The goal of the support group is to provide support for the many men and women who dedicate their lives to helping all of us in our times of greatest need.

The first responders put their lives at risk every time they answer a call for help. They experience a multitude of horrific things that can lead to Occupational stress Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which has led to a high number of suicides. This support group will give peers a chance to support each other and offer hope to those suffering the effects of the trauma they experience being a First Responder.

As a retired member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police of 32 years, I have seen firsthand the need for this kind of a support network. Thank you for considering the request for funding for the First Responders Café Society so they can continue to do their important work and grow their Society so they can reach and offer help to even more First Responders.

Sincerely,

Mike Morris  
MLA Prince George-Mackenzie

**Prince George:**  
#102, 1023 Central St. West  
Prince George, BC V2M 3C9  
Phone: 250-612-4194  
Fax: 250-612-4191

**Mackenzie**  
P.O. Box 2125 140 – 403 Mackenzie Blvd.  
Mackenzie BC V0J 2C0  
Phone: 250-997-5281  
Fax: 250-997-5631

**Legislative Office:**  
Room 201  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4  
Phone: 250-356-6171  
Website: [mikemorrismla.ca](http://mikemorrismla.ca)

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26/10/2018

**First Responders Café Society**

Dear Sir or Madam:

**Re: Letter of Support**

Please accept this letter of support for the FIRST RESPONDERS CAFÉ SOCIETY.

The Burns Lake Fire Rescue Department is a strong advocate for mental health services for First Responders, and the FIRST RESPONDERS CAFÉ SOCIETY provides a valuable resource for all First Responders in the Burns Lake area.

Through their workshops and open houses, they assist First Responder agencies and their members to have access to counselling services, and mental health resiliency training.

The FIRST RESPONDERS CAFÉ SOCIETY is providing a much-needed service to the community and to all of its First Responders.

I am very happy to write this letter of endorsement of the FIRST RESPONDERS CAFÉ SOCIETY, and look forward to continuing to work with them to support my members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Krause".

Robert Krause  
Director of Protective Services  
Village of Burns Lake