

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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### **Grant funding and donations enable Mesachie Lake to continue community fire service**

**DUNCAN, BC** – The community of Mesachie Lake now has a solid foundation for the future of its fire service, thanks to a \$350,000 grant to retrofit its aging firehall and a number of donations for a replacement fire truck.

Residents of Mesachie Lake, a community of 90 homes in Electoral Area F – Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls, have been considering the future of their fire service since 2018, when it was determined significant investment would be required for the service to remain viable. The firehall required major structural and aesthetic upgrading, and the fire engine had reached its end of life.

Residents were faced with a choice between two options: borrowing a significant amount of money with the cost borne by the small number residents, or ceasing operation of the local fire department and amalgamating with the neighbouring community fire service in Honeymoon Bay. With little time left to decide on a path forward, CVRD staff applied for a grant through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) in the hopes to cover at least some of the cost of a new firehall and make the continuation of service a viable option. Concurrently, a number of businesses and local organizations were solicited for potential contributions to the purchase of the new fire engine.

“I’m incredibly proud to say we were successful on both counts, and we have the required funds to retrofit the firehall and purchase the fire truck with no impact to the taxes of Mesachie Lake residents,” said Ian Morrison, Director of Area F – Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls. “I want to thank everyone for working together on behalf of the community to make this happen.”

The new fire engine was purchased at a cost of \$248,500 with contributions from the Teal Jones Group, Mosaic Forest Management, Northview Timber LTD, Pacific Marine Rescue Society, Gemini Falling Contracting and Tuck Brothers Contracting.

Over the last three years, the MLVFD Review Group, made up of residents, firefighters, CVRD staff and the Area F Director, completed significant work including:

- reviewing and discussing various third-party reports and assessments
- learning about topics like the Firefighter Competency and Training Handbook and Fire Underwriters Insurance
- conducting environmental scans and analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) for both the service retention and amalgamation options

“Being faced with the task of determining the best option for our community was challenging,” said Dave Craft, Co-Chair of the Mesachie Lake Volunteer Fire Department (MLVFD) Review Group. “Mesachie Lake has maintained its own fire service since the community was established nearly 100 years ago, and it’s a source of pride for many of us to be self-sufficient when it comes to protecting our own properties and lives. I’m very proud

of the diligent work our Review Group did in representing the needs of our community.”

The MLVFD Review Group also oversaw the completion of building and hazardous materials assessments, an architectural survey for the potential retrofit scope of work, obtained quotes for replacement fire trucks, and learned about the possible funding options.

“This is fantastic news for our community and the 15 members of our fire department who all look forward to continuing their service with an upgraded firehall and truck,” said Kevin Smith, Fire Chief for the Mesachie Lake Volunteer Fire Department.

This funding builds on positive news for regional emergency management announced earlier this year when the CVRD began a new contract for its 911 dispatch service with North Island 911, which is anticipated to save the CVRD a minimum of \$400,000 annually.

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*For more information, please contact:*

Kris Schumacher  
Manager, Communications & Engagement  
[kris.schumacher@cvrd.bc.ca](mailto:kris.schumacher@cvrd.bc.ca)  
250.701.2631