

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

7. UBCM Resolution: PFAS-Free Firefighting Gear Funding

Submitted by: Councillor Bligh

WHEREAS

1. Per-and-Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) compounds, commonly found in traditional firefighter bunker gear and fire retardant foam, pose significant hazards to firefighters and communities, including potential carcinogenic effects and environmental contamination as a “forever chemical”;
2. On April 9, 2024, Council unanimously approved a one-time Vancouver Fire Rescue Services 2024 budget increase of \$2,825,000 for the purchase of PFAS-free bunker gear through the general stabilization reserve, aligning with evolving safety standards and addressing concerns over PFAS exposure;
3. Prioritizing the acquisition of PFAS-free gear reflects a commitment to firefighter safety and occupational health standards; and
4. By embracing these safety and occupational health changes, and transitioning to safer alternatives, fire departments can mitigate the risks of PFAS exposure, safeguarding both firefighters and their communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council endorse the following resolution for submission to the 2024 UBCM convention for the consideration of the membership:

RESOLUTION

MOTION: Provincial Funding for PFAS-Free Firefighting Gear in British Columbia

WHEREAS the health and safety of firefighters across British Columbia are routinely compromised by exposure to Per-and-Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), through the use of PFAS-containing fire retardant foam and through dermal absorption from the water-repellent inner liner of their turnout (bunker) gear, particularly during periods of extreme heat and high physical exertion commonly experienced by firefighters in the line of duty;

AND WHEREAS the City of Vancouver recently approved a one-time budget increase of \$2.8 million to procure Per-and-Polyfluoroalkyl free (PFAS-free) bunker gear for all Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) personnel, thereby becoming the first fire department in North America to transition to PFAS-free turnout gear to significantly reduce the health risks associated with PFAS exposure and the persistent nature and resistance to degradation of these "forever chemicals" in the environment and the human body:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM call upon the province of British Columbia to allocate provincial funds specifically for the procurement of PFAS-free bunker gear for all B.C. firefighters, to prioritize their health and safety while ensuring their gear meets the highest standards of protection and safety without the use of PFAS and exposure to the harmful effects of these forever chemicals, and work towards the introduction of alternatives to PFAS-containing fire retardant foam.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this motion and the meeting minutes be forwarded to UBCM in accordance with Council direction.

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