

Oak Bay Fire Department  
Resignation Letter

To whom it may concern,

To be a volunteer firefighter is no small chore. It is years of training (really it never ends) and dedication. On top of that, we have prided ourselves on training to becoming proficient firefighters and gaining the trust of those firefighters around us. We do not take lightly the responsibility that has been placed on us to guard those lives around us, both firefighter and civilian.

We have never once asked anything in return for our services. We have believed in volunteerism most of our lives, and we believe in helping to make our community a better place. Countless times we have seen people at their worst moments and situations, but in this manner we are no different than any other firefighter. We as firefighters share these experiences for better or for worse. It is through these experiences that we have grown a brotherhood and sisterhood that we all take great pride in.

A firefighter's acceptance into that brotherhood/sisterhood does not come necessarily the moment that one joins a fire department. Rather, it comes from training, working together and learning to trust one another regardless of what one's role in the fire service is. Trust. It is at the core of the fire service. It's something that is not unique to the fire service, we see this also in policing, the military, and other types of services. For at its core in the fire service, trust means relying on those you work with your life. That may sound dramatic, but understand that every time a firefighter responds to a call, anything can happen including making the ultimate sacrifice. It happens all the time. New firefighters need to gain that trust of the other senior firefighters through training, communicating, and performing with excellence each and every time as if someone's life depends on it, because it does.

We need the leadership of this community to understand that firefighters are dedicated individuals that serve their communities by building a trust amongst themselves and the communities that they serve. We will not go into a burning building with just anyone. We need to trust that the individual going with us has our backs and will do whatever it takes to make sure we accomplish the job and get home to our families safe. That trust is not limited to only members of our fire department. There are members from many surrounding fire departments that we also give that trust to including from SSFD that have communicated openly and shown us a respect and commitment to our craft. We can only hope that we too have earned their trust in much the same way. We believe that we have.

In much the same way, we as firefighters need to trust that our leadership has our best interests in mind when making decisions both on the emergency scene as well as around the firehall. That too is a trust that must be earned, but really comes down to communication and actions. We have known throughout our careers that leadership has our backs to the point that, God forbid, if we have to make the ultimate sacrifice, they will look after our families the best

way possible. That same notion has extended to our neighbors as they have demonstrated their commitment to our department for over 40 years. We do not currently have confidence that this new municipality would do the same.

This process of amalgamation has been fraught with behind closed door actions, no communication, and what feels like more of a hostile takeover than an amalgamation. Up until January 1st when all this was to take effect, we were told absolutely nothing to the point that we had no idea on January 1st at midnight, what an emergency call was going to look like. We find it extremely disrespectful how this province has forced this on our communities and had absolutely no communication about what that meant. There is no trust built into this process which is why so many have great apprehension with this amalgamation. The details have been left to the new council and municipal leadership to decide how this “new” community moves forward and with that responsibility comes the need to build trust amongst yourselves, the community, and those that implement the policies and decisions you make. The key to this trust building is open and honest communication and thus far, that has been lacking.

Trust. It has not been evident in this process from the beginning. Amalgamation implies cooperation and collaboration. There has been neither in this process. Thus far, the council has not been the uniting body that it needs to be for this amalgamation to be genuine and enduring. Different factions have sought to divide and conquer without recognizing the short-term and long-term repercussions of these actions. We, the members of Oak Bay Fire Department, have been open to the collaborative process of working together. Unfortunately, nobody has asked us. Only the councilors who represent our area have bothered to sit with any of us to hear our concerns and even they appear to have been shut out of any conversations. This has turned into an us versus them situation and we never wanted it to be this way and it certainly didn't have to be this way. All we had asked for are two things that do not cost this community any more than it already does. One, time to discuss and work this out like mature adults and leaders who rise above the pettiness to do what's best for all. Two, a truly collaborative mindset to work together to make the best fire service possible for the citizens of this municipality.

The council and leadership have continued to make unilateral decisions with absolutely no discussions. There has been no attempt to build trust and it is now clear to us that there will be no attempt made to build that trust. We are making a decision that we never wanted to have to make and never should have been put in a position to have to make. We cannot serve under a leadership and community that we do not trust and one that has disrespected our service so much, and that is disheartening. If it has not already been made abundantly clear, this community and province cannot afford to lose any more firefighters let alone a department of them. All the equipment in the world is not going to save you if there's nobody there to run it.

Given the reasons above and with great trepidation, the undersigned hereby resign their positions with Oak Bay Fire Department effective **March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023**. This will allow time for the powers-that-be to make the appropriate arrangements to ensure that some sort of coverage is available to the former area of Oak Bay/Parrish of St. David. By the end of the day on this date, all property belonging to the Oak Bay Fire Department will be returned to the firehall at 611 Route 170.