

NEWS RELEASE

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Major Questions on Safe Fire Staffing Levels Go Unanswered by City Hall

Are fire department staffing levels meeting North American guidelines and are they safe for Kelowna Fire Department firefighters?

Professional Engineer and Kelowna City Council Candidate Peter Truch -- running under the slogan Vote for Truth, Vote for Truch -- raised this question as a member of the public regarding a massive 34-storey variance for a downtown highrise at public hearing in July. Kelowna Professional Firefighters Association President Jason Picklyk also called attention to the staffing levels on duty in an open letter around the same time.

At the July public hearing, Kelowna's Fire Chief avoided responding to the question and instead talked about fire equipment in buildings, except to say "we don't follow NFPA [North American] guidelines for staffing, we follow different metrics." Hearing this response, Truch launched a formal service request (#657025) to the City asking for this information. In the request, City staff were asked for what those metrics are, and what tactical plans Kelowna Fire Department (KFD) would follow in the event of a highrise fire.

"It has been more than a month and there has been ZERO response from City Staff or from Council to the service request," says Truch. "If the City can't respond in a month, how can they adequately respond in 10 minutes? People's safety is at stake across the city, and nobody at City Hall, including responsible senior City staffers and our incumbent councillors and mayor seem to care. Why is nobody being accountable and telling the public why we are not meeting North American guidelines? Exactly what metrics does Kelowna use? Are they considered safe working conditions by our firefighters? Why does the City hide important public safety information from the public?"

Instead, Kelowna Fire Chief Travis Whiting penned a letter on Aug. 5 acknowledging "these are valid questions," while again offering no response to the questions asked. Truch says this is the same letter writing tactic City Hall used earlier this year to deflect from other issues of for information, and to this day, continue to withhold documents related to other requests for information on development files and master planning documents. "It has become a pattern of City Hall," Truch notes.

North American (NFPA 1710) guidelines call for 42 firefighters to respond to a highrise fire (greater than seven stories) in no more than 10 minutes and 10 seconds. KFD typically only has 24 firefighters on duty at any given time.

Truch is calling on the City to be transparent and respond publicly with what metrics KFD uses for highrise fires, and an explanation as to why there is such a discrepancy between North American guidelines and our current staffing levels. According to Truch, meeting these standards has a real implication on financial costs that City Staff and Council are not accounting for.

"Kelowna urgently needs leadership that will ask the right questions and bring truth and transparency to City Hall and Kelowna residents. Since nobody on Council seems to show that leadership, I will, even from outside a Council seat," says Truch.

About Peter A. Truch: Peter is a father to two, a professional engineer, minor hockey manager and now Candidate for City Council who loves Kelowna and cares deeply it remains democratic, prosperous today and for future generations. He stands for truth and transparency in government. His campaign website is at www.petertruch.ca.