



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

July 31st, 2007

RE: Monica Ahlstrom's July 25th email

To the Membership of SAR Alberta,

The SAR Alberta Executive became aware of the email to our members from Monica Ahlstrom on July 30, 2007.

First and foremost SAR Alberta would like to thank the many people who have assisted in working towards a lead ministry for search and rescue in Alberta. A lot of time, effort and work has already been invested, and the work will continue for many years to come.

SAR Alberta has learned late today that the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) is stepping up to the plate as lead ministry for ground search and rescue in Alberta. It is my understanding there was a meeting (in response to Monica's letter to the Premier) between AEMA and the Solicitor General and a decision was made between these two government departments as to who would best serve search and rescue in Alberta. SAR Alberta was not involved in any aspect of this meeting.

It is true that SAR Alberta Executive met with the Workers Compensation Board (WCB), RCMP and AEMA late last week. The meeting was a result of a SAR Alberta meeting with EMA last year, in which then President Reese Wolsey expressed concerns about WCB coverage that we as volunteers have in-light of all activities we perform outside of just searching for the lost person (ie. evidence searches, floods, etc). WCB was the only focus of the meeting and the same presentation will be delivered to the Board and the membership. Originally I was the only Executive member invited. At my request the meeting was attended by the entire Executive (with the exception on Darrell Dancause who had previous commitments).

What I saw in that meeting was truly a commitment between the RCMP and AEMA on working together for the betterment of search and rescue in Alberta. As a matter of fact the next meeting will include the entire Board, as the Executive felt that this was the best way to communicate what was being presented (the more involved everybody is, the more everybody is informed).

It is also true that the Alberta Emergency Management Agency falls under Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing and they have reviewed a number of documents that SAR Alberta has sent to the Government of Alberta over the years (including those sent to the Solicitor General). SAR Alberta has no control over how our submissions are shared within the government.

Related to this discussion, I want to inform you about a ceremony I attended on Monday, July 30th, representing SAR Alberta. The ceremony highlighted the progress that has been made to the provincial emergency response capabilities since the Edmonton Tornado. I had the opportunity to meet with David Hodgins, Managing Director of AEMA and senior manager for Emergency Management Alberta and the Fire Commissioner's Office. David Hodgins expressed interest in meeting and working with SAR Alberta. I mentioned that it would be best if he and his senior management team attended a SAR Alberta board meeting, and the SAR Alberta Executive will work to make this happen.

For the first time in a very long time, I can see commitments being made on the provincial front for SAR in Alberta - this will be a work in progress for SAR Alberta and the Government of Alberta in a continually working partnership focused on enhancing SAR in Alberta.

To follow up with this letter, I have directed that a number of associated documents be made available to the Membership via our website. Once posted, please take the time to view the information and engage others on the topics and issues presented. Thank you.

Rodney Dietrich
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"There is an old saying that the course of civilization is a race between catastrophe and education. In a democracy such as ours, we must make sure that education wins the race."
– John F. Kennedy