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Hello Fire Service Trustees,

First, may I offer congratulations to the newly elected trustees. I hope that you will find your experience on the Board a rewarding one.

I'm writing now to strongly encourage you to promote the FireSmart program more actively than perhaps it has been in the past. It's obvious that on Salt Spring, there is a major risk of fire because of the very large wildland-urban interface (WUI) compared to a typical municipality, and because on Salt Spring we usually experience a significant period of drought beginning some time in the summer through the autumn. The FireSmart program is designed to minimize the fire risk to a property at the interface.

My concern arises from a negative experience, a year or two ago, with the owner of the forested property next to mine. The details of the dispute are not important to lay out here, other than to say that I approached them for permission to invoke FireSmart (at my expense) because of the potential danger; the danger was confirmed by Chief Tom and Ron Chamney*. The excuse given for denying permission was that there is a restrictive covenant on the property that precludes them from considering my request. I don't deny that there may well be a restrictive covenant and, of course, that the covenant has to be respected. So I asked them whether we might together approach the covenant holders and seek a waiver for the purpose of FireSmart; I emphasized that the FireSmart process would be overseen by Ron Chamney, who provided me with a detailed mitigation plan. Moreover, I made it clear that the FireSmart measures could have no conceivable negative effect on the ecological integrity of their property. The owners never replied to several repetitions of this request, other than to say that their land is private property and I must not trespass.

I am aware that nobody (at least not those in the Fire Service) has the authority to compel a property owner to accede to FireSmart. But I wonder whether you trustees might be willing to approach the major covenant holders on the island to see whether they would agree, as a matter of principle, to entertain requests for allowing FireSmart mitigation measures wherever appropriate. In other words, you wouldn't be asking for a waiver on any individual's behalf, but for a general policy whereby they would entertain FireSmart requests wherever advised

* Ron's credentials in this area are considerable. He sat as a board director for "Partners in Protection", the organization responsible for the creation of the now Canada wide FireSmart Program. He was in charge of the WUI portfolio for the City of Calgary Fire Department and was a WUI firefighter and forestry initial attack firefighter for many years. Now no longer on the Salt Spring Board of Fire Trustees he is establishing himself as a WUI and FireSmart Consultant.

by the Fire Service. I would like to believe that our principal covenant holders would agree that such a policy is more than reasonable, especially because the covenant holder would still retain complete authority to deny any individual request.

Might you be willing to take this on as a project, hopefully sooner rather than later?

Many thanks for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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1997 (L)NY document
are needed to see the letters

Reuben Kaufman

CC: Chief Tom Bremner
tbremner@saltspringfire.com