

BRIEFING NOTE – DEVELOPMENT OF NEW RAC FIELD SERVICES ORGANIZATION

BACKGROUND

A RAC Field Service organization encompassing the ARES, NTS, Bulletin and Official Observer services was operated by the former Canadian Division of the ARRL, its successor - the CRRL, and now RAC. Interestingly, none of these organizations saw fit to implement the equivalent of the full Field Organization operated today by the ARRL (see page 4). An argument can be made that a complete field organization structure in Canada along these lines could materially aid in developing a Section-level administrative organization that could, in turn, enhance RAC Field Services operations while managing the delivery of certain RAC administrative services. Using the ARRL Field Organization as the “strawman” for purposes of analysis and discussion, working groups under the auspices of the VPFS Council would develop the required processes, documentation, and terms of reference to provide guidance to various managers and other staff.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Briefing Note is to provide the basis for a pre-meeting discussion in support of a motion, to be proposed by the Vice President Field Services (VPFS), seeking the approval of the RAC Board to move forward with and implement a new RAC Field Services Organization.

DISCUSSION

This motion is wide ranging and could have a significant impact on both Executive and Section-level management of RAC activities. Unlike the ARRL model which draws a distinction between the administrative management of various Field Organization elements and the ARRL Field Service, the current RAC “Field Organization” is actually the Field Service. In RAC programmes such as the Affiliated Club programme are managed at the Executive Level with no direct linkage between individual amateur radio clubs and other sections of RAC operating at the operational and tactical levels thus limiting overall effectiveness. In addition, without the services of a Technical Coordinator, RAC’s ability to lead and facilitate wide-ranging and truly national discussions makes it very difficult for RAC to formulate truly national positions among Canadian amateurs regarding important regulatory issues at the domestic and international levels. The current organization leaves these critical issues in the hands of an isolated few to manage. The lack of a formal administrative organization at the Section level also has a significant impact on RAC field services and on the ARES in particular. At a time when governments at all levels exert increasing control over their emergency management programmes, RAC has resisted the practice of local ARES groups collaborating directly with municipal authorities. This is contrary to the current reality where a municipality’s emergency management structure and system of formal agreements with NGO partners is increasingly governed by provincial legislation and regulation. This puts these groups in an untenable position, with an increasing number moving outside RAC’s sphere of influence to achieve the independence needed to fully integrate their operations into existing municipal organizations. It is no accident that independent provincially-sponsored EMCOMM groups continue to gain popularity while the RAC organization is increasingly seen by stakeholders to be both uncoordinated and parochial.

As significant as the required management change may be at the Executive level within RAC, as administrative functions are devolved to the Section level it will be more so for the Section Managers. As currently structured, the RAC Section Manager's primary role is to appoint and "supervise" operational heads of the Field Service. Once this is accomplished, there is little real administrative work to be done with the exception of vetting appointments for VPFS approval and "feeding" TCA magazine with Section News. What mandate there may be to liaise with individual amateur radio clubs is a virtually impossible task given the geographic size of the current section boundaries. This is seen by most persons in the field, if not all, as such. Moreover, there is absolutely no mandate to provide direct liaison with provincial and territorial governments thus crippling the ability of the ECs to achieve their local mandate. Most importantly, there is at present little if any formal communications mechanisms in place under the current RAC organization structure to serve as a working conduit from the local amateur radio clubs across Canada to the RAC Executive to openly, respectfully and constructively discuss key issues of interest regarding RAC policy and related administrative matters.

Assuming that the RAC Board will make a decision to move forward with the implementation of a new field organization, there will be a corresponding impact on the number of sections as well as a need for a provincial coordinating body in those provinces and territories with two or more sections. The model and "strawman" for this development process may once again be found within our sister organization - the ARRL. Generally speaking, ARRL Sections encompass approximately 100,000 licensed amateurs. What is not known at this point is the composition of the state-level governing bodies or their relationship to ARRL Divisional Directors; however, what is known is that there is a system of Councils. In this regard, a similar new Canadian field organization structure as depicted at the top of page 4 could be considered as part of the VPFS Council's developmental process.

SUMMARY

The development of a modern and more effective field organization structure would foresee:

- a) a move of some administrative functions now at the Executive level to the operational field organization level;
- b) a move of some national administrative coordinators now under the charge of one RAC Vice President or other to the charge of VPFS where this is consistent with the objective of using the proposed RAC Field Organization to manage the delivery of programmes (the responsible Vice President would retain direct consultation with the appropriate Coordinator within the VPFS Council Secretariat);
- c) the creation of some form of coordinating body to work with provincial and territorial governments while working collaboratively with an increased number of ARES Sections in some provinces and/or territories;
- d) an expansion in the number of ARES Sections to provide more equitable representation in the more populated provinces, practical liaison and cooperation with regional or county governments and a more appropriate span of control between ARES Section Managers and District and Emergency Coordinators;
- e) a significant increase in the responsibilities of the Section Managers, with a concomitant increase in skill sets and selection/appointment criteria based on knowledge, skills and personal suitability; and,
- f) an extended period of analysis and discussion by VPFS Council-sponsored Working Groups as representative groups bring forward recommendations for re-structuring and operating the proposed Field Organization.

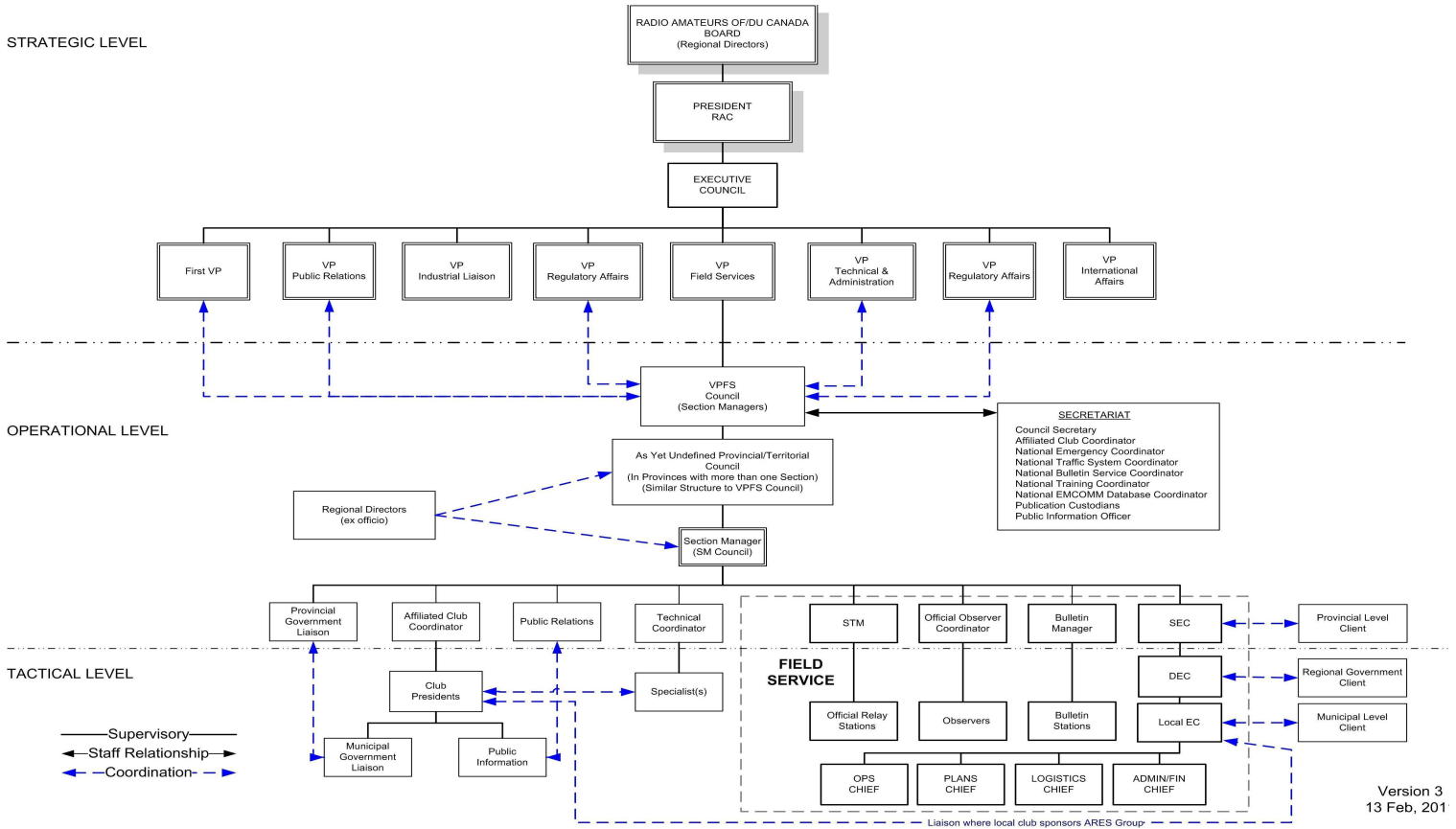
CONCLUSION

A long-term Board commitment to this process and continuing active support from RAC's senior leadership is vital to its timely success. Without fundamental transformation and leadership within the RAC Field Organization, particularly at the Section level, there is little rational purpose to maintain the existing structure in an age where sophisticated digital communications are available to every citizen in the country and emergencies are managed by professionals adhering to government policies, common standards and uniform emergency response doctrine. The purpose of the Field Organization must be to provide better coordinated and relevant programmes to the Canadian amateur radio community, but more importantly, to provide the Canadian public with a coordinated, professionally-orientated, auxiliary communications service when called upon in times of emergency and/or disaster response. Without such a *raison d'être*, a major public (i.e., government) argument for continued support to Canadian amateur radio community will be strategically weakened to say the least!

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RECOMMENDED NEW RAC FIELD ORGANIZATION



ARRL FIELD ORGANIZATION

