



CD17.4.1

Friday, January 13, 2017

Community Development and Recreation Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 2N2

Re: CDRC Meeting, Jan 16, 2017 9:30 am.; Agenda Item CD17.4, RFP No. 3806-15-0012
To: Committee Clerk

Starfield LION was a proponent for the above referenced RFP for the supply to the Toronto Fire Service (TFS) of its structural firefighting bunker suits. The recommendation for award for this RFP is to be debated Monday January 16th in Committee Room #1 with the CDRC.

Starfield LION has significant concerns about the procurement process and the award.

Immediately upon notice of the recommendation, we requested repeatedly a debrief as per the announcement letter and City policy, so as to understand more fully the reasons for the selection of the recommended product and address our concerns. However, the Purchasing Department has in our view unfairly rejected our request until after the Council approves the contract award.

We ask the Committee to postpone action until a full debrief can be made and questions about the product selected can be thoroughly investigated to assure that proper procurement principles and City policy have been followed and the desired safety, comfort, quality, and service are not compromised by this award.

As the incumbent supplier to the TFS of its structural firefighting bunker suits for the past 11 years, and aware of the absolute value the TFS places on safety, comfort quality and service, we must call attention to what in our view are significant questions regarding the procurement of the product proposed to be purchased that must be considered by the Committee. Because firefighter bunker gear is a safety product, in our view the selected product and vendor should raise concerns among Committee members that are significant enough that any action by the Committee must be postponed until a thorough debrief with our representatives has been provided to review the details of the procurement of this product and possible risks to the City and the TFS of proceeding with purchasing what we believe is an unproven fabric.

We are also concerned that it appears that the recommended product contains an outer shell fabric material called Ten Cate "Pioneer." The mandatory material specified in the RFP was TenCate "Advance." Addendum No. 3 amended the mandatory requirement to state that, "an approved equivalent is an outer shell fabric that is equivalent or superior to the physical properties of the TenCate Advance."

We are concerned that proven lower cost but superior performing and more comfortable alternative products were not considered in the procurement, to the detriment of the City. Starfield LION submitted a total of three proposals for the tender; each consisted of a different composite, different performance values and different costs. However, one of Starfield Lion's "approved equivalent" composites was rejected without explanation prior to wear trial, while we now understand that the winning proponent was allowed to provide a similar "approved equivalent" fabric composite for wear trial. This particular composite should have been considered the best performing of any composite submitted not only by Starfield LION but other proponents as well, with respect to overall performance, safety and comfort for the firefighters. The rejected fabric composite meets all the requirements of the RFP specifications and is the latest generation of high strength fabric that has been purchased by many major metro fire departments in North America and proven has several years of proven performance. Based on our pricing provided in the pricing envelope and the

winning proponents pricing, this rejected composite was the lowest cost/best value offering for this tender. Starfield LION was able to meet 100% of the tender specifications' original requirements with no substitutions and should have been considered an approved equivalent because it is "equivalent or superior to the physical properties of TenCate Advance. Simply put, the wear trials failed to include a technically superior or equivalent composite which would have performed equally or better to the recommended product in the wear trial. Because of the lack of explanation of the rejection of Starfield's third product submission, and its unfair exclusion from the wear trial, this rejection raises questions that this RFP process may have violated best practices with respect to principles and duties of fairness and consistency.

The RFP also states on page 81 that "Consideration will be given to the performance of total moisture management and overall breathability of the garment." Again, it is unclear how the evaluation objectively and fairly considered "total moisture management" and rejected Starfield's fabric composite as non-compliant, even though this composite has 20 years of proven superior moisture management and comfort properties over the selected product. This apparent inconsistency further raises questions about whether the RFP process violated duties of fairness and consistency.

The recommendation in the Report for Action submitted to the committee is for the City to purchase its bunker gear from another vendor, a small Quebec-based vendor called Innutex, with no prior experience, to our knowledge, supplying large quantities of firefighter bunker gear to the City of Toronto. In addition, the committee is recommending the selection of a product made with an outer shell fabric that at the time of the RFP submission deadline was on the market for only several months and even now to our knowledge has not been purchased in large quantities by any single major metropolitan fire department and does not have multiple-year proven durability in real firefighting conditions.

Starfield LION is by far the long-standing market-leading supplier of structural bunker gear in Canada, making bunker gear for hundreds of Canadian cities and towns, including Ottawa, Vancouver, Mississauga, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Brampton, Vaughn, Regina, Saskatoon, St. Johns and many others. We have been the incumbent supplier of firefighting bunker gear to the TFS for 11 years through three award cycles, starting in 2005. The product that we currently supply to the TFS is made right here in the City of Toronto at our Benton Rd. plant located near Keele St. and Lawrence Ave. where 90 hardworking employees contribute to the local economy.

Through the three award cycles, Starfield LION has proven to be a valued partner to TFS because of i) our proximity to both Quartermaster stores on Rotherham Ave. and HQ on Dufferin St. ii) the deep and vast relationships between key Starfield LION staff and multiple TFS stakeholders including senior officer staff, health and safety committee members, logistic and purchasing staff iii) quick response to any and all questions regarding not only our production for TFS, but information on NFPA standards, upgrades, repairs, adjustments, scheduling of recruit classes and large measuring/handout exercises (all key personnel and support staff are available through the Toronto plant office iv) support of various TFS groups in fund raising and public awareness campaigns v) consistently competitive pricing over 11 years.

As recently as the last contract extension award in 2015/2016, Starfield LION was called upon to supply additional product to TFS in a closely negotiated extension that allowed us to meet the requirements of the TPFA in their demands for updated bunker gear before expiry date, within a short time frame. Over 2800 sets of gear were delivered, without any problems, to the TFS during 2016, including 40 delivered in June at a very substantially discounted rate using the proven outer shell that was specifically named as a fabric brand in this RFP.

Throughout these many years, we have proven ourselves to be an important partner of the TFS, with outstanding customer service and personal attention, and impeccable quality, safety and reliability. All of TFS's requests have been dealt with professionally and within a very timely manner because of the proximity to and the very high value we place on TFS as a very important customer. We are one of only 5 or 6 Canadian fire services manufacturers (not including truck manufacturers), that can supply any type of equipment to the Canadian fire services. We are the only supplier located in Toronto, providing what can be called the most demanding, important and nuanced product to fire services across the country and internationally.

Starfield Lion is also a significant employer in the City of Toronto. Our plant pays City of Toronto municipal taxes and the vast majority of our staff live within the City boundaries, and contribute additional municipal taxes and have a total payroll in 2016 of over \$3.4 million. Starfield Lion is the rare success story of a Toronto-based cut and sew manufacturing operation that has grown employment instead of moving overseas like so many other apparel sewing companies.

In all the circumstances and having regard to our significant concerns about the procurement process and its outcome (which we believe the Committee, once properly informed by our further submissions, will share), we must respectfully ask the Committee to postpone action until a full debrief can be made and questions about the procurement of the product selected can be thoroughly investigated to assure that safety, comfort, quality, and service are not compromised by this award.

We thank you for your review of our concerns and look forward to discussing this further with you at the committee meeting on Monday January 16th at 9:30 am.

Thank you.

Respectfully,



Steven Schwartz
Chief Executive Officer
Starfield LION

Cc: Mark Smith – Senior Vice President, LSRG
Andy Schwartz – Corporate Counsel
Robert Hosselet – National Sales Manager, Starfield LION

