

To: Mayor and Council

From: Tyler Moffitt, Fire Chief/CEMC

Date: January 5, 2022

Subject: Informational Report: Update on the Fire Rescue Service

INFORMATION ON LEGISLATION RESPONSIBILITY

A Fire Chief is the person who is ultimately responsible to the council of a municipality that appointed him or her for the delivery of fire protection services as per the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*.

As well, the Fire Chief's (Supervisor's) legislative duties are also to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of all workers.

Legislation requires us to adhere to the **Three Lines of Defence (3-Pillars)**

- I. Public Education and Prevention
- II. Fire Safety Standards and Enforcement (Fire Prevention Inspections)
- III. Emergency Response (Fire Suppression Services)

INFORMATION ON CURRENT STAFFING LEVEL

We only have **6 Fulltime Firefighters** and currently have **15 Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters**.

Seven of our 15 members also belong to **Alberton**, which is part of **ACEL (Alberton, Chapple, Emo, La Vallee) Fire & Emergency Services**.

Therefore, if we were ever to request mutual aid from **Alberton** ... more than likely all their available members will already be on scene of the incident in Fort Frances; we may get an extra one or two firefighters who are uncertified to respond if called upon.

As well, **ACEL (Alberton, Chapple, Emo, La Vallee) Fire & Emergency Services** is losing Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters and is short staffed.

Three of our 15 members also belong to the **Couchiching Fire Department**. As well, they are three of four people trained that could respond with a pumper truck.

Therefore, if we were ever to request mutual aid from the Couchiching Fire Department ... more than likely these members are already on scene of the incident. As well, Couchiching Fire Department has minimal staffing, which are mostly uncertified.

Note: We can request Mutual Aid from International Falls Fire Rescue. However, at times they can have limited staff available. As well, they are currently in the process of recruiting Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters.

HISTORY AND RETENTION TIME OF PART-TIME (VOLUNTEER) FIREFIGHTERS

60-plus Town of Fort Frances Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter's have come and gone since **2005**. The average retention-time of a Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter is **3.2 years**.

OTHER COMPOSITE FIRE SERVICES

Southern Ontario Fire Services report the average retention-time for Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters is **3.5 years**, along with spending **\$20,000** on each firefighter in wages, and equipment. Their direction from council is to keep onward with hiring Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters ... regardless of the huge turnover.

Kenora Fire and Emergency Services has **12-Fulltime Firefighters** and can staff their service with **50 Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters**; they are down to **24 Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters** and have been for a while. As well, they are in the process of hiring a Deputy Fire Chief and have two other firehalls within the city that Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters can respond from.

Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency Service has a critical shortage of Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters. Several fire stations are staffed with just four or five members. Their annual report shows they are **343** Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters short staffed.

Greater Sudbury is currently **145** Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters short of their complement of **350** that they should have on staff.

CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF PART-TIME FIREFIGHTERS ACROSS CANADA

There is a critical shortage of Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters across Canada, and in the Town of Fort Frances. The staffing shortage in Canada has been widely documented on social media, television, radio, print media and just about everywhere else, directly in public view.

ONTARIO BASED CAREER/PART-TIME FIRE SERVICES (COMPOSITE SERVICES)

Ideally, at a minimum, most of the Ontario-based Career/Part-Time (Volunteer) Fire Services, which are (Composite Fire Services) should employ **1 Career Firefighter per 1,000 population** and about **5 Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters per 1000 population**.

In comparison to the above paragraph, in an ideal situation ... Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service should have **Two more Career Firefighters**, and **27 Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters**.

Also, when looking at the comparable fire services utilized each time there is a new negotiated contract with our career staff ... we are the only Composite Fire Service in Ontario that has a minimum of One Career Firefighter working a shift alone.

In other comparisons ... all the Greater Sudbury fire halls that are Career/Part-Time (Volunteer) are now always staffed with a minimum of Four Career Firefighters per shift. In Kenora, they are staffed with Three Career Firefighters per shift. In Kirkland Lake and Kapuskasing they are staffed with a minimum of Two Career Firefighter per shift.

Note: In the community of Val Therese, which has approximately the same population of Fort Frances ... it is staffed with a minimum of Four Career Firefighters per shift. On top of this, they are part of the Greater Sudbury area and have other fulltime and parttime support to respond.

ASSEMBLY AND TURNOUT OF PART-TIME (VOLUNTEER) FIREFIGHTERS

Currently, there are concerns pertaining to the assembly and turnout of Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters. We do not know who and how many Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters are responding to an emergency incident when the fire page goes out.

In my 34-plus-years in the fire service ... it has always been impossible and unrealistic to predict how many Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters were going to show up to a fire or a critical emergency incident. However, most of the time ... the entire complement of Fulltime Firefighters has shown up to a fire or critical emergency incident when called upon and have outnumbered the Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters on scene.

When fire strikes within our community, the decisions makers need to ensure we have an adequate staffing level of professional firefighters ... when our community needs it.

Meanwhile, please refer to the graph, which shows the 14-Year Average of Fire Fighters attendances at Fire Calls.

NO TIME COMMITMENT (TIME & FAMILY, THE MOST PRECIOUS THINGS TO PEOPLE)

Fact, the constraints on today's working families makes it impossible for many people to serve in any type of volunteer capacity, let alone as a Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter.

Another key factor as to why people do not join a fire service is that it is an on-demand service, as well as being a dangerous occupation.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF FORT FRANCES

Over **52%** of the population is over the age of **40**. Over **32%** of the population is under the age of **25**. Therefore, realistically ... that leaves **16%** of the remaining population ... to draw from to recruit part-time firefighters.

Meanwhile, one could challenge this statement and ask why not recruit people **under the age of 25**. Case in point, people between the ages of **18 and 25** a lot of the time cannot commit to the **4 to 5 years** that it takes to be trained and gain experience as a certified firefighter.

As well, many people within the ages of **18 to 25** are either continuing onward with their education and/or starting out with a new career after they graduate college, university, and trade school.

Statistically, out of the **16%** ... there is not enough people to draw from for Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter positions. As well, most people know we are an on-demand service, and know that firefighting is dangerous ... whether it's Fulltime or Part-Time (Volunteer).

Even if the town were to hire 27 new Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters, we are looking at a time frame of 4 to 5 years of training ... 4 to 5 years to gain any true experience and certification ... that is if they were to stay on. (Average retention-time is **3.2 years**)

TRAINING TIME COMMITMENT

NOTE: There are **114 NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) Firefighter Skill Sheets** that need to be completed, combined with the following training:

- Basic recruit training 40 hours (over 2 weekends).
- Fire Fighter Level 1 – 78 hours online plus 9 days (72 hours) in class.
- Fire Fighter Level 2 – 36 hours online plus 7 days (56 hours) in class.
- Hazmat (requirement for certification) – 5 days (40 hours) in class.
- 114 hours online.
- 208 hours in class.

Total time commitment = **322 hours**. (40 days)

NOTE: *If a new member could commit **8-hours** per month to the Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service ... it would take them **3.4 years** to complete the **Training**. As well, there is another **48-hours** of annual maintenance training and **24-hours** of annual specialty training that needs to be completed.*

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The requirement to have certified Firefighters will be a requirement in the province of Ontario. The new regulations under the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*, which will be coming early on this year will directly affect all firefighters within the Fire Rescue Service.

KEY FIREFIGHTER STAFFING ROLES AT FIRE SUPPRESSION INCIDENTS

Meanwhile, there are various key roles during a fire suppression incident such as:

- Incident Commander (1 person),
- Safety Officer (1 person),
- Accountability Officer (1 person),
- Sector Officers (1-2 persons),
- Decontamination Officer (1 person),

- Pumper Truck Operators (2 operators always on scene at all fire related events and other incidents i.e., train derailments. **Note: Fort Frances, busiest train traffic port in North America,**
- Initial Fire Attack Suppression Team (2 persons),
- Initial Fire Attack Suppression Team Back-up (2 persons),
- Rapid Intervention Team (4 persons).

Note: As you can see from the roles listed ... there are **16 key roles** in total; we do not have **16 Firefighters** that have their **NFPA 1001 Firefighter Level 2**.

In fact, these key roles at the very least need to be doubled up due to the shortage of *Professional Firefighting* personnel and *Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighting* personnel who have experience and certification; other times we are tripling duties because of the limited staffing.

These key roles ensure an effective and safe response to emergency incidents and are standard key roles that need to be established at fire and emergency related incidents for the Health and Safety of Emergency Responders.

As well, **NFPA 1710** is a known international recognized industry standard based on scientific evidence and research that establishes how many firefighters are needed to put out each fire and rescue anyone trapped. The **NFPA (National Fire Protection Association)**, which is internationally recognized has established these standards, as well as specifies the minimum number of firefighters needed.

NFPA 1710 ... as per 5.2.4 Deployment, 5.2.4.1 Single-Family Dwelling Initial Full Alarm Assignment Capability, 5.2.4.1.1 ... The initial full alarm assignment to a structure fire in a typical 2000 ft square (186 m square), two-story single-family dwelling without basement and with no exposures shall provide for the following: Total effective response force with a minimum of 16 (17 if an aerial device is used).

EXAMPLES OF FIREFIGHTING STAFF FOR FIRE & EMERGENCY CALLS

On September 29, 2021, only four Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters responded to an all hands-on-deck call out for a fire call on Scott Street, which ended up being cooking related.

The Five Fulltime Firefighters and Fire Chief that responded outnumbered the Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters that responded. Thankfully, it ended up being a minor fire call out. On September 28, 2021, only two Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters responded to an all hands-on-deck call out for an actual fire suppression call to the Town of Fort Frances Memorial Sports Centre. Four Fulltime staff responded.

This was in fact an active fire that our Fire Rescue Service responded to. The Fulltime Firefighters outnumbered the Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters on scene.

As well, this was a large public facility, which serves our citizens and the public who are made up of small children, older adults (seniors), people with disabilities, as well as people with intellectual disabilities.

Meanwhile, on March 14, 2021, our Fire Rescue Service responded to a serious MVC (Motor Vehicle Crash) outside of town limits.

A page went out for all hands-on-deck. Only two Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters responded to the firehall. As well, they were two of our new members with no certifications and limited experience with our Fire Rescue Service. Five Fulltime staff responded.

MISLEADING PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A FIREFIGHTER

There are a lot of misleading perceptions of what it takes to be a Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter such as: *“Anyone can be and serve as a Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter.”*

Fire Services are not a social club; fire services are an essential emergency service that is demanding and requires a huge time commitment on individuals who decide to seriously serve as a Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter.

Being a firefighter is extremely physically demanding and requires a high level of fitness.

As well, the leadership of fire services across Ontario, as well as Canada has seen many misleading perceptions; these misleading perceptions are coming from not only the public, but also the leadership of municipalities across Canada.

Meanwhile, the OPP and Paramedic Services of Ontario have standards and many steps towards hiring on with their respective organization ... the fire service is no different.

Being a Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter is a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year commitment. To be a reliable and competent Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter, a person needs to be on call constantly and must be trained to a high level.

Missing a training activity for a community volunteer might create an inconvenience ... but missing a training session or drill for a Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter can be dangerous.

The commitment needed for becoming a Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter is significantly more involved than spending a few hours as another type of community volunteer.

The training hours alone greatly exceed any national average for a volunteer activity, clearly demonstrating the intensity of the Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter commitment.

FIREFIGHTING IS DANGEROUS

Being a Firefighter ... Fulltime or Part-Time (Volunteer) is one of the most dangerous jobs around ... there is no way to sugar-coat this fact.

The Cancer Carcinogens (Hazards) that firefighters can be exposed to is one reason why the job is dangerous. Firefighters are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with invasive cancer than the average person.

In fact, there are 17 – Prescribed Cancers recognized by the **Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)** in Ontario that firefighters can acquire, which are work-related occupational diseases presumed to occur due to the nature of the worker's employment as a firefighter.

As well, firefighters are under physical and psychological stress on a regular basis; the traumatic stress and emergency incidents that firefighters are exposed to is another reason why the occupation is dangerous.

Firefighters have shorter life expectancies than the average population and are three times more likely to die on the job. Studies vary but typically their life expectancy is 10-15 years less than the national average.

FIREFIGHTERS & FIRST RESPONDERS MENTAL HEALTH

Firefighters and other First Responders such as Paramedics and Police Officers see people in the worst moments of their lives; they never forget.

Case in point, when firefighters drive by houses ... intersections ... they are reminded of past fires and accident scenes.

Firefighters see the faces of victims ... they hear the cries of the victims and family's ... they remember the smells ... it never leaves them.

CANADIAN LABOUR SHORTAGE ... FORT FRANCES IS NOT EXEMPT

Fact, there is a well known labour shortage throughout Canada; the community of Fort Frances and the Rainy River District is no exception ... we are not exempt.

STUDIES AND TASK FORCES HAVE LOOKED AT CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The major contributing factors to **WHY** there is a significant Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighter shortage is basically what I have touched on throughout this report.

Canada has seen a significant decline in their Part-Time (Volunteer) Firefighters numbers over the many decades.

Past leaderships throughout Canada saw this coming ... they turned a blind eye and even went as far as reducing (cutting) the career firefighter staffing levels in their municipality; they weren't prepared and put their respected community ... their citizens at risk.

Meanwhile, as per the graph the attached graph ... it clearly shows that the fulltime firefighter staffing level in Fort Frances was **reduced by 50%** over the course of **8-years (2005-2013)**.

SCIENTIFIC STUDY PROVIDES QUANTITATIVE DATA

A scientific study provides quantitative data and shows that the size of Firefighter Crews and Arrival Times Substantially Influences the Fire Services ability to Protect and Save Lives ... including Property, the Environment, and the Economy.

INFORMATION TO CONSIDER

Meanwhile, a recent case ruling (arbitration award) in **Val Therese, Ontario**, which has approximately the same population of Fort Frances has in fact established a precedence in Ontario for a composite fire service ... where a minimum of four fulltime career firefighters are required to be always on duty at the fire hall ... in the interest of health and safety.

Note: Previously there was always two fulltime firefighters always on duty. Fulltime Career Firefighters were added after a Coroner's inquest into a fire death that killed three people in 2001.

The Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service is a composite fire service and is required to respond to numerous types of emergency incidents, including (but not limited to), motor vehicle collisions, medical emergencies, rescue, hazardous materials incidents, and **fire suppression incidents**.

However, there are many times where only one firefighter is on duty during a day shift. As well, on night shift there is only one firefighter on duty. We are the only composite fire service in Ontario that staffs their fire hall with only one fulltime career firefighter.

Things to consider: Not only the Val Therese Award ... but the Kapuskasing Fire Service Award, and the Kirkland Lake Fire Service Award.

Kapuskasing: Went down to 4 Fulltime Firefighters and got back up to 9 Fulltime Firefighters; the 9th Fulltime Firefighter is a floater. The 2021 Budget for their Fire Rescue Service was **(9.3%) \$1,798,660**, of their Total Operating Budget, which was **\$19,314,262**.

Kirkland Lake: Renewed the Letter of Understanding regarding Staffing and amended a paragraph that read: "The Corporation, without exception, must have a minimum of two fire fighters, excluding the Fire Chief, on duty at all times with one firefighter being a qualified officer in charge." The 2021 Budget for their Fire Rescue Service was **(10.5%) \$1,828,712**, of their Total Operating Budget, which was **\$17,403,881**.

Meanwhile, **Kirkland Lake**, which has a population slightly greater than Fort Frances has 1 Fulltime Fire Chief, 4 Fulltime Platoon Chiefs, 10 Fulltime Firefighters, and 25 Volunteer Firefighters.

AVERAGE CANADIAN MUNICIPAL FIRE SERVICE OPERATING BUDGET

In Canada, Fire Services Operating Budgets range from **7.2% to 8.2%** of the Municipal Total Operating Budget.

The average Canadian Fire Service Operating Budget is **7.71%** of the Municipal Total Operating Budget. (Data provided by the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs)


Meanwhile, the Town of Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service 2021 Operating Budget was **5% (\$1,058,403)** of the town's Total Operating Budget (**\$21,143,701**), which is below the **7.71%**.

As a cost comparison (an extreme example), adding an extra Captain (7 Fulltime Firefighters) in 2021 would have put the Operational Budget to **\$21,143,701 + \$149,370. = \$21,293,071.**, which would have been a **0.71 increase** to the town's Total Operating Budget.

The Fire Service Operating Cost would have been **\$1,207,773** or **5.7%** of the town's Total Operating Budget, which would still be below the Canadian average for fire services.

In closing, this report is for information only so council can decide to set, alter, or adjust fire protection service levels, in consideration of advice and guidance provided by the fire chief.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tyler Moffitt".

Tyler Moffitt,
Fire Chief/CEMC