

## Emergency Services Station Location Study

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Prepared by:	Joseph Nicholls Community Safety
Recommended by:	General Manager of Community Safety

## Report Summary

This report and presentation presents findings from the station location review conducted by Operational Health and Research Limited (ORH) and provides recommendations on the number and location of fire and paramedic response stations and locations across Greater Sudbury. Additionally, the report provides analysis of the recommendations and outlines next steps. The full ORH report is attached and noted in Appendix A.

## Resolutions

### Resolution 1:

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury directs staff to develop a financing plan for consideration as part of the 2024-2029 capital budget and forecast to support station consolidation options as described in the Station Location Review conducted by Operational Research in Health (ORH) Limited that includes, among other details, analysis of lease financing for plan elements involving new construction, as outlined in the report entitled “Emergency Services Station Location Study”, from the General Manager of Community Safety, presented at the City Council meeting on December 13, 2022.

### Resolution 2:

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury approves that the following station consolidation choices be made permanent:

- a) Skead station into Garson, which has been in effect since early 2022, and
- b) Vermilion station into Dowling, which has been in effect since mid-2018;

AND THAT the Skead and Vermilion buildings and land be declared surplus and prepared for sale, as outlined in the report entitled “Emergency Services Station Location Study”, from the General Manager of Community Safety, presented at the City Council meeting on December 13, 2022.

## Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)

The information in this report aligns with the strategic priorities of completing a Community Safety Revitalization review to address the long-term fiscal and operational sustainability of the facilities under Asset

Management and Service Excellence.

## **Financial Implications**

The ORH station location review was approved by Council and funding was provided by the Province's Audit and Accountability Fund in the amount of approximately \$198,000. If approved as presented, annual operating savings from consolidating the Skead and Vermilion stations is approximately \$50,000 per year. These savings would be applied to offset increased operating costs for the remaining stations, largely related to increased energy costs.

The disposition of the Skead and Vermilion stations would be subject to a public bid process and the proceeds would be treated in accordance with the City's policy for the disposition of public land.

If approved as presented, existing approved funding of \$538,000 is available for architectural services that would support new station construction requirements.

## **Executive Summary**

In the 2019-2027 Council Strategic Plan, City Council outlined priorities that included a review to address the fiscal and operational sustainability of the City's 24 fire and paramedic response stations throughout the community. The review's objective is to determine the ideal number and location of fire and paramedic response stations needed to achieve sustainable asset management and timely emergency response while maintaining or improving the current service level.

To deliver this review, Council approved the engagement of Operational Research in Health (ORH) Limited to produce a station location review for fire and paramedic stations that determined the ideal number and location of emergency service stations. ORH is a leader in their field having undertaken similar reviews with various fire and paramedic services around the world and in Ontario including Guelph, York Region, Muskoka and Simcoe County.

The review found nine out of the 24 fire and paramedic stations are ideally located to provide emergency response to the areas they serve. Four fire and paramedic stations have the potential to be relocated to provide an overall improved response. The remaining 11 fire and paramedic stations could be consolidated with minimal impact to response. These options are further summarized later in this report.

Except for the recommendation to consolidate Azilda and Chelmsford stations, staff support ORH recommendations. The building conditions of Azilda and Chelmsford stations are satisfactory; consolidating them would increase response times in Azilda. Staff believe the benefits of consolidating these two stations as described in the ORH report, while worthwhile, do not outweigh the risks.

The review also found the existing paramedic stations are generally ideally located in the community, noting the Capreol fire and paramedic stations could be consolidated to reduce our building footprint with minimal impact to response.

Since 2014, \$1.8 million has been invested in maintenance of fire and paramedic stations. Approximately \$1 million has been taken from capital budget, operating budget, and reserves to manage unplanned repairs. These buildings do not fully meet operating requirements.

Staff recognize, based on expressed community priorities and known capital investment needs, sustaining 24 fire and paramedic stations is neither practical nor required. The ORH report describes how the Corporation

can reduce its asset footprint without impairing service or staffing levels required for meeting Council's service level expectations.

## **Staffing**

There are no staffing impacts resulting from this report. Consolidating stations will not result in any positions being eliminated. Staff reporting to stations that are recommended for consolidation would report to the next closest location and remain active with the service. Existing, ongoing recruitment efforts are not affected by the recommendations in this report and will continue.

While not the focus of this report, low staffing numbers at several fire stations continues to be a factor we must consider as part of overall response models. Staff acknowledge the connection some people have with their fire and paramedic stations and the important role they've historically played. Firefighters and paramedics are essential for the City's emergency response services and are a valued part of the community. To ensure a financially sustainable future for our emergency services and ensure it is supported with facilities that meet all of its operating requirements, changes are needed.

## **Background**

The Community Safety Department maintains 24 fire and paramedic stations. These stations house the staff, vehicles and equipment to enable fire suppression, prevention, safety education, rescue and emergency medical response services. Generally, these buildings are expected to provide at least 50 years of service, assuming appropriate maintenance expenditures are made.

Most of the stations are in the latter stages of their expected 50-year life cycle. Two stations are under 30 years of age, 13 are between 30 and 50 years, and nine exceed 50 years. The average age of the combined 24 stations is 48 years.

The operating budget does include funding for regular maintenance of the stations although this upkeep has not been able to keep pace with the rate of deterioration. This challenge was identified in the [Auditor General's Value-for-Money](#) report, presented in 2017.

Station location and consolidations will combine staffing to create a larger pool of firefighters able to respond from a central location. Consolidating stations creates an opportunity to draw from larger population areas, putting more people into stations and available to respond.

## **Unfunded Capital Requirements**

Since the first Building Condition Assessment report in 2014, expenditures have increased from \$17.1 million to \$35.5 million in 2018 and could exceed \$43 million in 2021, based on a 10-year outlook.

Since 2014, with other community priorities and capital investment needs, there has been \$1.8 million invested in fire and paramedic stations. In the same timeframe, nearly \$1 million has been taken from the holding account and operating budgets to manage unplanned asset failures. This is only anticipated to grow with an unknown amount of unplanned capital needed to manage future asset failure.

## **Summary of ORH Analysis and Modelling Outcomes:**

A summary of the outcomes in the ORH report can be found below. The full report can be found in Appendix A.

## **Full-time / Career Fire Stations**

Analysis across the full-time staffed stations determined New Sudbury (Leon Street), Long Lake and Val Thérèse would remain at their current sites.

The other stations were generally close to ideal locations with the following notes:

- Minnow Lake Station is in the least ideal location of all 24 stations and would be best located in the area of the Kingsway and Falconbridge Road.
- Van Horne Station would be ideally located 500 metres north. With no available property, this is not a viable option.

Staff are supportive of the recommendation to relocate Minnow Lake. This relocation has the potential to benefit response times for both fire and paramedic services.

The full recommendations on full-time stations are outlined beginning on page 29 of Appendix A.

## **Part-time / Volunteer Fire Stations**

In analysis of the volunteer staffed stations, the report determined Capreol, Levack, Dowling, Whitefish and Chelmsford should remain at their current sites.

Other findings include several stations could be consolidated without compromising overall response or changing staffing levels. These include:

- Consolidate Skead and Falconbridge into ideal site for Garson
- Consolidate Val Caron and Hanmer at current site in Val Thérèse
- Consolidate Vermilion Lake into Dowling
- Consolidate Beaver Lake into Whitefish
- Consolidate Wahnapiatae and Coniston at ideal site
- Consolidate Waters, Lively and Copper Cliff at Anderson Drive
- Consolidate Azilda at Chelmsford

Overall, staff supports the recommendations outlined with the following exceptions:

- While consolidating Azilda and Chelmsford may result in a time increase to the first apparatus arriving on scene, the overall response improves with more staffing resources available. As both Azilda and Chelmsford maintain stable staffing levels at this time, there is limited operational benefit to this consolidation.
- Vermilion Station has not been in operation since summer 2018, with the remaining staff member reporting to Dowling Station, therefore the recommended approach has already been achieved with no negative consequences to response times.
- Skead Station has not been in operation since early 2022 following structural damage. Staff have since been reporting to Garson Station, therefore the recommended approach has been achieved with no negative consequences to response times.

The full recommendations on volunteer stations are outlined beginning on page 31 of Appendix A.

## **Paramedic Stations**

The recommendations outlined in the review of paramedic response stations determined most of the current

resources are already appropriately deployed.

One opportunity for improvement was noted in Capreol. Consolidation of the paramedic station and the existing fire station would reduce operating costs without impacting staff and response times. It would maintain service levels in the community.

Where renovations and/or new stations are considered to improve fire response, consideration will be made to ensure adequate and appropriate space is made for paramedics to support overall emergency response in the community. The full recommendations on paramedic stations are outlined beginning on page 45 of Appendix A.

## **Next Steps**

Subject to Council's consideration of the recommendations in this report, staff will proceed with further analysis and develop financing plans. Staff will secure an architect that will identify the specifications required for new builds and renovations required for remaining stations and produce construction cost estimates. A cost analysis and financing plan will be developed and presented in the second quarter of 2023 as part of the preparatory work for the 2024-2029 capital budget and forecast.

## **Conclusion**

The ORH report mitigates the risk associated with continuing to operate existing stations beyond their expected useful life. Ensuring emergency service buildings meet operating requirements allows staff to focus on response efforts, improves the work environment for staff, and maximizes the usefulness of limited municipal funds. The plan described here presents no staffing implications and does not impair service levels.

## **Additional Supporting Documents**

Comprehensive Fire Service Review, IBI Group – March 3, 2014

<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/live/emergency-services/fire-services/pdfs/ibi-group-comprehensive-fire-services-review/>

Auditor's Value for Money Report – Fire Services – presented to Audit Committee June 20, 2017

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=8454>

Update on Station Revitalization Project – presented to the Finance and Administration Committee October 22, 2019

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=1935>

Asset Management Status Report – presented to the Finance and Administration Committee October 22, 2019 (see Table No. A2: Facility Condition Index on page 19)

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=1933>

Asset Management Status Report – presented to the Finance and Administration Committee December 8, 2020 (see Table 2 on page 7 and Table A4 on page 27)

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=38504>

Non-Competitive Purchase – Community Safety Department Station Location Study – presented to the Finance and Administration Committee January 19, 2021

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=38136>

Community Safety Building Condition Assessment Presentation – presented to the Finance and Administration Committee July 7, 2022

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=228>

Ontario Regulation 588/17: Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure

<https://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/view.do?postingId=37568&language=en>