

Results of the Emergency Services Station Location Study Community Engagement Plan

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Report Summary

This report provides the results of the community engagement for the Emergency Services Station Location Study.

This report was deferred from the June 27, 2023 City Council meeting. Given the volume of the attachments, they have not been appended to the agenda. The attachments can be viewed at: <https://www.greatersudbury.ca/agendas> (City Council agenda of June 27, 2023).

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

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan in the area of Asset Management and Service Excellence. Specifically, it addresses work to complete a Community Safety Station revitalization review to address the long-term fiscal and operational sustainability of the facilities. While decisions associated with the station revitalization have CEEP implications, this report has no direct relationship.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications to this report.

Background

At the January 24, 2023, meeting of City Council, staff were directed to undertake an engagement plan to support the Emergency Services Station Location Study. The Study was completed by Organizational Research and Health (ORH) and its main objective was to determine the ideal number and distribution of emergency service stations in Greater Sudbury. Subsequently, the goal of the engagement plan was to inform the public about the study's recommendations and learn more about resident concerns.

An estimated 935 staff hours were spent planning, implementing and attending sessions to fulfill the goals of the engagement plan. Of this total, approximately 297 hours were logged by non-union staff working outside of the corporation's standard workday, and 42 overtime hours were recorded by unionized employees. This amount is underestimated, as staff did not immediately begin tracking hours directly to the engagement project. The initial estimate anticipated between 300 to 500 hours of work to complete this project.

Eleven in-person information sessions were held across Greater Sudbury, which allowed interested residents to review information, ask questions and express their concerns about the recommendations in the Emergency Services Station Location Study report. Staff from Fire Services, Paramedic Services, Assets, Communications and Engagement, and the Executive Leadership Team attended sessions.

General project information and station-specific details were provided, and paper feedback forms were available. All paper forms received at the in-person sessions were manually entered into the online system to ensure accurate reporting.

The information provided at the in-person sessions was also available online via the City's Over to You engagement portal, which included a feedback form. Those who were not able to provide feedback online or in-person had the option to call 311. While 311 did not receive any calls on this matter, this option is made available for residents who may not have access to or comfort with technology.

Two virtual sessions that were open only to staff were held on March 30, 2023: one in the afternoon and one in the evening. Staff had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback during the meeting or afterward via email. These meetings were open to staff from Paramedic Services, and full- and part-time/volunteer firefighters.

Summary of Communications

Promotion:

Engagement opportunities were shared with the community through a variety of channels, including:

- Public Service Announcements
- City website
- City social media
- Over to You engagement platform
- Community partners and networks
- 311 customer interactions (email, chat and phone)
- Media partners

Media Statistics:

Eight media requests from three local media outlets regarding the drop-in sessions were completed. While most requests were for general information, two were for more in-depth coverage of the Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) rankings and two were regarding volunteer firefighter recruitment.

A report from the City's media monitoring system calculates 150 separate posts (media stories, letters to the editor, etc.) from March 1 to May 19, 2023, on news sites across Ontario that mention the Emergency Services Station Location Study and information sessions. Of those, 98 per cent were evaluated as neutral in tone, and 2 per cent were determined to be negative. These 150 articles appeared multiple times across a variety of outlets and sites. When removing duplications, 18 unique news articles and letters to the editor were published.

Social Media Statistics:

Throughout the engagement period, information was shared on Twitter and Facebook. During that time, 47 individuals engaged with unpaid content on Twitter and 239 individuals engaged with unpaid content on Facebook by either liking or sharing (note: comments are closed on the City's unpaid Facebook posts). The original PSA announcing the drop-in sessions reached 3,461 people on Facebook and 624 accounts on Twitter. Two reminder posts on Facebook were seen by 4,259 and 5,744 people, respectively.

Summary of Engagement Results

Staff Sessions

Day session attendance: **35**

Afternoon session attendance: **51**

Total Attendance: **86**

Fire and Paramedic Services Employees (not including administrative/office staff): **533**

Staff also engaged with numerous firefighters at several public sessions.

Staff Concerns:

1) Station Locations

- travel distance for volunteers
- distance to main arteries
- coverage area changes
- railways between a responding firefighter and their station

2) Volunteer Retention

- distance to new station may be a deterrent for some
- stations lacking the minimum number of firefighters to be recognized as a station under FUS

3) Response

- Changes to response areas

4) Engagement

- No consideration of part-time/volunteer firefighters' opinions on consolidation.

Information regarding concern No. 4:

- Two employee engagement session were held to discuss the recommendations in the study.
- The ORH report recommendations are based on detailed analysis of data. Where staff consultation is appropriate, as with the volunteer recruitment committee, it is completed.
- It should be noted that a Collective Bargaining Agreement is in place for volunteer firefighters, which outlines the terms of their employment with the City. Station locations were not part of any negotiations over the last several years.

Responses to the other concerns are included in the Common Themes section below.

Public Sessions:

Attendance:

Because drop-in sessions were a come-and-go format, numbers are estimated. Several residents attended more than one session. Many residents were also present outside of the facilities and did not engage directly with staff, making estimating numbers difficult. Based on previous in-person engagement experiences, these sessions had above normal participation.

Coniston: 25 to 35
Skead: 150 to 200
Beaver Lake: 120 to 150
Falconbridge: 17 to 20
Hanmer: 10 to 15
Wahnapitae: 100 to 125
Val Caron: 10 to 15
Vermillion Lake: 10 to 15
Copper Cliff: 35 to 45
Waters/Lively: 25 to 30

Feedback:

Written feedback submitted at the in-person sessions was manually entered into the Over to You system to ensure accurate reporting. In total, 879 submissions were received and 3,111 page visits occurred. The majority of traffic was driven by social media sites (City and others), directly from the Over To You website or via search engine.

The following summary was compiled from the Over to You Emergency Services Station Engagement reports. The findings reflect a sample of opinions taken from those who willingly participated, collected from both the English and French sites. Appendix A includes a detailed report of the findings.

Online Summary of Engagement: [Overtoyou.greatersudbury.ca](https://overtoyou.greatersudbury.ca)

From March 22 to May 19, 2023:

- Over 3,100 visits to the Over to You Emergency Services Station Location project page
- 637 contributors submitted 878 feedback forms
 - 91 of the feedback forms were manually entered from the written feedback received at in-person sessions.
 - A number of contributors submitted more than one feedback form. Since residents at some in-person sessions were helping others submit forms, these duplicates were not removed from the summary.
- Over 1,000 participants were informed (downloaded a document, engaged with content or visited multiple pages)

Notable Statistics:

- 46% of respondents listed overall response time as their main concern
- 22% entered a Wahnapitae postal code
- 24% said they were leaving feedback for the Wahnapitae station

Feedback by Respondent Location (based on postal code entered)

Respondent Location	Percentage of Total Feedback
Wahnapitae	22%
Skead	16%
Coniston	13%
Worthington	13%
Chelmsford	4%
Copper Cliff	3%
Garson	2%
Hanmer	2%
Sudbury	1%
Capreol	1%
All other locations	Less than 1%

Feedback by Station Location

More detailed station-specific information is included in Appendix B.

Station Location	Station-Specific Highlights
Wahnapitae	<p>24% of total feedback received</p> <p>The proposed (new) Wahnapitae station location would remain within the community. Attendees at the public session were mostly unaware of this.</p>
Skead	<p>20% of total feedback received</p> <p>Residents were concerned about the current temporary closure of the station and the location of the rescue boat.</p> <p>Prior to making any major capital investment into emergency services stations, Council direction on the proposed plan is required.</p> <p>Since water rescue is a Technical Discipline falling under National Fire Protection Association standards and provincial legislation, it requires extensive initial and annual training. The rescue boats are currently stationed with the water rescue trained personnel at Long Lake and Minnow Lake stations. The rescue boats are trailered and hitched to a response truck with all required rescue equipment already aboard so they can be quickly deployed into lakes across the entire municipality.</p>
Beaver Lake	<p>14% of total feedback received</p> <p>Residents were concerned about travel time from the next responding station(s).</p> <p>Response into Beaver Lake already comes from neighbouring stations due to the lack of available volunteer firefighters.</p>
Coniston	<p>13% of total feedback received</p> <p>Residents were concerned about travel distance to Wahnapitae.</p> <p>Although volunteer response time into Coniston is moderately affected by the proposed consolidation, in the case of a structure fire, the initial response is coming from a nearby career station, Minnow Lake, as reflected in the FUS grading for Coniston. Additionally, with the proposed consolidation of Coniston and Wahnapitae, there would be an increased number of available firefighters to respond on the next arriving fire trucks.</p> <p>Residents were also concerned about the presence of train tracks.</p> <p>The impact of trains is outlined in the Common Themes section below.</p>

Hanmer	<p>13% of total feedback received</p> <p>Residents were concerned about response time to structure fires in Hanmer.</p> <p>In the case of a structure fire, the initial response is coming from a nearby composite station, Val Thérèse, as reflected in the FUS grading for Hanmer. Additionally, with the proposed consolidation of Hanmer and Val Caron into Val Thérèse, there would be an increased number of available firefighters to respond on the next arriving fire trucks.</p>
Vermillion Lake	4% of total feedback received
Val Caron	4% of total feedback received
Copper Cliff	3% of total feedback received
Waters	2% of total feedback received
Lively	1.5% of total feedback received
Minnow Lake, Garson and Falconbridge	Less than 1% of total feedback received

Common Themes:

Six options were available in the feedback form: overall response time, taxes/area rating, insurance, staffing, no concerns and other. Residents were asked to choose the topic they were most concerned about or could add their own with further explanation.

Option	Concern
Overall Response Time	<p>Overall response time was listed as the number one concern with 46% of survey submissions.</p> <p>ORH was asked to determine the ideal number and location of emergency service stations. The company used several datasets, including paramedic and fire response data from 2016 to 2020, to test millions of simulations to better understand the overall impact to emergency response under the proposed consolidated model. This determined the ideal number and distribution of emergency service stations.</p> <p>Fire response is a complex, community-wide response system. Crews and apparatus respond according to many factors, including skilled and available staff, call types, technical rescue skills, equipment requirements and the scale of the emergency.</p> <p>If the staff recommendations in the consolidation plan were fully implemented, the overall 90th percentile response time would decrease by 10 seconds.</p>

	<p>3,600 square kilometres is a challenging response area, and we continue to develop strategies to improve system-wide response. Where distances are more significant, there are opportunities to explore a response from home model. Volunteers who would travel a greater distance would be the second or third responding emergency vehicle. The consolidated model includes increasing support trucks to ensure responders can get to the scene.</p>
Other	<p>The ‘Other’ category was the second-most popular choice with 29% of submissions indicating that response time, insurance, or taxes were not what concerned them the most.</p> <p>Although this selection was chosen, the majority of comments were about either a combination of the options listed in the form, or all of the above. More popular feedback in the other category that didn’t include the listed choices included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of the project: An architect has been hired to determine the cost of three options, as directed by Council. The options address three scenarios: maintain all stations at current levels, bring all stations up to current standards, and consolidate stations, which includes a mix of new stations and major renovations. • Safety: The ORH report describes how the consolidation of volunteers into one station provides greater resilience. In many instances the service being provided is already being delivered from neighbouring stations, for example Lively and Whitefish into Beaver Lake, and Garson into Skead. • Location of train tracks: Dispatch has access to Yard Masters, CP police and CN police to address emergency responses that require their intervention to support emergency response. Staff analysis of paramedic and fire response has not determined any significant response delays as a result of trains, with the exception of Capreol where an agreement is in place with CN.
Insurance	<p>Concern about insurance was listed as the number one concern for almost 10% of survey submissions.</p> <p>Insurance rates depend on several factors that are not within the municipality’s control.</p> <p>The Fire Underwriter Survey (FUS) provides data on public fire protection for fire insurance statistical work and underwriting purposes to insurance companies.</p> <p>Ratings provided by FUS are not anticipated to change significantly throughout this process.</p>

	FUS grades are not evaluated based on station location alone and factor in source of water supply, responding staffing levels and age of the fire trucks.
Taxes/Area Rating	<p>Taxes/Area Rating was listed as the number one concern for 5.6% of survey submissions.</p> <p>An architect has been hired to determine the cost of three options, as directed by Council. The options address three scenarios: maintaining all stations at current levels, bring all stations up to current standards, and consolidate stations, which includes a mix of new stations and major renovations.</p>
Staffing	<p>Staffing was listed as the number one concern for 5.1% of survey submissions.</p> <p>Volunteer fire stations are located where population and demographics are able to support a volunteer station; locations are not based on individual volunteer travel times.</p> <p>A current best practice, and one many fire services are adopting, is an arterial road model. Both administrative and frontline staff agree stations are optimally located on arterial roads. Staff heard concerns about driving past an incident to get to the hall and explained this is an existing occurrence that will occur regardless of the proposed station location changes.</p> <p>As detailed in the ORH report, the consolidation of volunteers in one station provides greater resilience in terms of availability of volunteer firefighters to respond. In many instances the service being provided is already being delivered from neighbouring stations, for example Lively and Whitefish into Beaver Lake, and Garson into Skead.</p> <p>Location-specific recruitment will occur where the number of active volunteer firefighters is low.</p>
No concerns	3.9% of survey submissions listed no concerns.

Atoilaparole.grandsudbury.ca

There were 11 visits to the French engagement site and one feedback form submitted. Due to the low participation, results from the surveys can be found in Appendix A.

Resources Cited

Emergency Services Station Location Study:

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=48209>

Emergency Services Station Location Study Community Engagement Plan

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=48464>

Appendices

Appendix A –

Summary and Detailed Project Report Over to You Greater Sudbury and À toi la parole Grand Sudbury.

Appendix B –

Station Specific Information Boards