

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides City Council with additional information and options for consideration based on the recent arbitration award, where the Board ruled in favour of the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighter Association's (SPFFA) proposal to increase staffing at Station 16 in Val Therese from two full-time firefighters per shift to four. Due to the significant fire services operating budget implications of this award, which is estimated at \$1.4 million per year for the hiring of ten additional full-time firefighters, City Council has requested more detailed information on this matter, including service level, area rating, community safety, and risk implications.

The options described in this report do not reduce volunteer firefighter complement levels, nor do they prompt the closure of a volunteer fire station in Valley East or in any other area of the City. The options presented for consideration offer City Council the opportunity to evaluate the desired service level for Valley East, with related staffing, outside of the recommendations in the arbitration award. The arbitration award is specific to the Val Therese Station, and does not result in the introduction of full-time staffing in areas of the City currently operated by volunteer firefighters.

Each option presented in this report has implications for the overall Fire Services' response capability, which can have effects on community risk (the probability and consequence of a fire or other emergency, and its impact on residents, property, economy, and environment). Each option changes the current risk level and, generally, increases overall risk. However, among the options, reassigning existing full-time staff from the Main Station aerial truck presents the least amount of risk. These options also impact area-rating as outlined in the corporation's Property Tax Policy, and taxes payable by property owners.

In order to comply with the binding terms of the arbitration award, and as previously described to Council, Fire Services has been staffing the Val Therese Station with four full-time firefighters per shift using overtime. If none of the options in this report are carried, staff will continue the current practice of ensuring four full-time fire fighters on each shift at Station 16. Continuing this practice using overtime is costly and unsustainable. Staff would anticipate additional direction from Council to fund a more permanent staffing arrangement in this regard in the Fire Services budget beginning in 2021.

The following three options are outlined in the report:

1. Reassign existing full-time staff from Main Station aerial (ladder) truck.
2. Convert Station 16 to volunteer.
3. Close an existing full-time station and reassign the firefighters to Station 16 and other career stations.

## **BACKGROUND**

On August 31, 2020, an interest arbitration between the City of Greater Sudbury and the Sudbury Professional Firefighter's Association, Local 527 (SPFFA) concluded. The arbitration board ruled in favour of the SPFFA's proposal to increase staffing at Station 16 from two full-time firefighters to four full-time firefighters per shift.

At the December 21, 2020, Finance and Administration Committee, Council requested other service level and staffing options at Val Therese in response to the arbitrated staffing award.

At the January 20, 2021, Special City Council meeting, resolution CC2021-20 was carried, requesting a report with all of the necessary background information to assist Council in determining the fire protection service level and subsequent taxation area rating adjustments as a result of the Val Therese staffing award.

This report outlines three options for Council's consideration, outside of the arbitration ruling. Each option involves changes in the fire protection level of service for residents, creates a shift in taxation, and may result in increased risk in some parts of the community.

### **Greater Sudbury Fire Response Model**

The fire response model in Greater Sudbury is complex and has many interdependencies. Each fire truck responds either alone or with trucks from other stations, based on established computer-aided dispatch recommendations. This is critical in ensuring proper minimum staff and equipment resources are on site to address each emergency response based on call type.

The staff resources required for the City of Greater Sudbury Fire Services to successfully perform interior suppression and rescue efforts on a residential home under 2,000 square feet is a minimum of 16 firefighters to make safe entry. Larger homes, commercial structures, or high-risk occupancies require additional firefighters to make entry and perform safe fire ground operations. This aligns with fire services best practices, Occupational Health and Safety requirements, the Ministry of Labour Section 21 guidelines and the Office of the Ontario Fire Marshall.

For a fire call, the emergency is dispatched to the closest fire stations. Initially, three units will respond with a request for a fourth unit to respond as rapidly as possible if a fire has been confirmed. Each truck has a minimum of four firefighters. As each truck arrives, firefighters will be assigned a critical fire ground task, as outlined by fire services best practices, and as required by legislation.

While the critical tasks of the four firefighters on the first responding unit establishes initial operations, they are awaiting the arrival of additional resources before performing other tasks. Critical functions that require up to 16 firefighters for a residential house fire include:

- **Initial Unit** - Incident Command (1), Pump Operations (1), Interior Attack Crew (2)
- **Second Unit** - Accountability Officer (1), Rapid Intervention Team (2), Tools and Pump Operators (1)
- **Third Unit** - Additional Hose Line (2), Ladders and Ventilation (2)
- **Fourth Unit** - Safety Hose Line (2), Second Rapid Intervention Team (2)

It is important to note that fires in multi-unit residences, apartments or commercial occupancies require significantly more firefighters to respond, exceeding the 22 full-time complement we have per shift.

Since 2015, in order to ensure a guaranteed minimum response to critical emergencies, Fire Services has been deploying full-time fire trucks, staffed with four firefighters, into volunteer response areas. This ensures, at a minimum, one fully-staffed fire truck responds to support minimum incident staffing requirements at critical emergencies. Critical emergencies are those which involve trains, aircraft, explosions, industrial complexes, hazardous materials, commercial vehicles, water/ice/high-angle rescues, and confirmed structure fires.

## **Community Risk Analysis**

Assessing fire risks within a community is the process of examining and analyzing the relevant factors that characterize the community and applying this information to identify potential fire scenarios that may be encountered. The historical data from Valley East and Fire District 1 indicate there are approximately 50 to 300 fires respectively per year, ranging from small fires to large structure fires. This information serves as the basis for formulating and prioritizing risk management decisions to mitigate the impact of these events.

Community risk for the three options presented in this report fall into two distinct response areas. The first response area is District 1 and encompasses Station 1 (Van Horne), Station 2 (Minnow Lake), Station 3 (New Sudbury) and Station 4 (Long Lake). The second response area District 4 and encompasses Station 15 (Val Caron), Station 16 (Val Therese), Station 17 (Hanmer), and Station 18 (Capreol) (see maps in Appendix A).

To understand community risk and the Fire Services' ability to mitigate the impact of emergency events, staffing, station location, and available resources are all critical factors. For example, staffing an initial responding fire truck with less than four firefighters or taking a truck out of service may affect the outcome of an emergency because on-scene activities anticipate certain minimum staffing levels before they can be carried out. The elapsed time required to assemble minimum staffing levels could influence the response plan and, therefore, the outcome of an emergency.

High Risk properties include large high-rises or multi-unit residential buildings, rooming and boarding houses, group homes, retirement and treatment facilities, hospitals, correctional institutions, schools, and several classifications of industrial or mining sites.

For more detailed information and analysis on community risk, see Appendix B.

### **Options**

This report provides an analysis of three options. Additional background information on the volunteer analysis can be found in Appendix C and a chart summarizing public risk and operational challenges for each option can be found in Appendix D. The area rating impacts listed below are based on 2020 fire area rates currently in place. The 2021 Property Tax Policy will highlight the shift in taxation and area rating impacts to taxpayers, based on the direction provided by Council.

The area rating amounts outlined below are estimates and include the potential tax change per household for each option, based on a home assessed at \$230,000.

#### **Option 1: Reassign Existing Full-time Firefighters from Aerial**

##### **Summary:**

Shift two career firefighters from the aerial truck stationed out of Van Horne and reassign them to Val Therese, reducing the aerial staffing to two. This would result in four full-time firefighters stationed at Val Therese, in line with the arbitration award.

**Risks:**

- The Main Station aerial (ladder) truck would only be staffed with two full-time firefighters, delaying arrival of sufficient fireground staffing to carry out essential operational tasks.
- A reduction in aerial staff would result in the Val Therese career firefighters responding to all critical fire emergencies in Fire District 1 (city core) in order to meet minimum fire ground staffing levels and to maintain aerial and tanker operations, leaving Valley East without a career response for extended periods

**Costs:**

- None

**Area Rating:**

- This area would move from a composite rate to a career rate. The fire area rates would be modified as follows:
  - Volunteer - \$159.89 (no change)
  - Composite to Career – Increase from \$261.38 to \$356.46 (\$95.08 per year)
  - Career – Decrease from \$375.59 to \$356.46 (\$19.13 per year)

**Option 2: Convert Val Therese Station to Volunteer****Summary:**

Move career firefighters from Val Therese into a full-time station, making Val Therese a volunteer station. The career firefighters need to be moved into a full-time station due to the CBA requirement to maintain a minimum staffing of 22 firefighters per platoon. The location of the firefighters has no impact on minimum fire staffing. For example, the Collective Agreement states as follows, 8:02 Staffing: the parties agree that the Employer shall maintain a minimum of twenty-two (22) full-time firefighters on each of the four platoons at all times. On duty suppression personnel shall only be assigned to in-service emergency vehicles or be in training (within the confines of the geographical response area and available to respond) at all times.

**Risks:**

- Time for fire service response from Station 16 to an emergency will increase, on average, by approximately five minutes.
- Process changes will need to be made that implement additional deployment through the paging of all volunteers in the Val Caron/Val Therese/Hanmer areas to ensure adequate staff response to emergencies, as this conversion would significantly increase volunteer call volumes in Valley East.
- Call volumes for Valley East volunteer stations may not be sustainable due to the increase in volunteer responses.
- Recruitment and retention challenges for volunteer firefighters would be potentially exacerbated by an increase in volunteer responses, increasing the risk of short staff situations.

- Population levels and property types in Valley East reflect characteristics typically associated with full-time fire protection services within the City; a volunteer response model may not be sustainable.

### **Costs**

- \$531,426 - Volunteer costs due to an increase in call volume by 453% including 64 medical tiered calls with an average staffing cost of a station call-out (\$542.33).
- In year one, included in the \$531,426, is medical tiered response costs of \$82,459 which includes volunteer response costs of \$34,709 and initial training costs (32 staff) of \$47,750.
- Medical tiered response in subsequent years would cost approximately \$47,125 which includes volunteer response, on-going training, and new staff training costs.

### **Area Rating**

- Moving the two full-time firefighters from Val Therese would move Valley East to a volunteer service level. The former composite area would now have their costs and assessments combined with the rest of the volunteer service areas. It should be noted that this option includes additional costs of approximately \$530,000 due to call volumes serviced by volunteers. The area rating of these changes is as follows:
  - Volunteer - Increase from \$159.89 to \$167.56 (\$7.67 per year)
  - Composite to Volunteer - Decrease from \$261.38 to \$167.56 (\$93.44 per year)
  - Career - Increase from \$375.59 to \$399.84 (\$24.25 per year)

### **Option 3: Realign Existing Full-time Stations**

#### **Summary:**

Option three is a service level change that entails the closure of a career station, resulting in the reassignment of two career firefighters per shift (8 in total) to Val Therese. The remaining eight firefighters would be reassigned within District 1 (1-2 per platoon) to in-service emergency vehicles to comply with the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The closure of a career station would have system wide consequences, therefore a station location study should be concluded before this contemplated reduction is implemented.

#### **Risks**

- Increased response times (fires, rescues, accidents, and medical tiered responses) for Fire Services cause calls to go longer without on-scene staffing. Closure of a full-time station within a district that services 75% of all annual calls will result in a delayed response into the area where the station closure occurs.
- Due to the interdependency of stations, a reduction in the number of on duty firefighters means staffing resources will be required from other stations, including Val Therese, or through the use of overtime.
- Delayed arrival of sufficient fireground staffing to carry out essential operational tasks.

- Reduced level of fire protection resulting in an increased risk by eliminating a career station in the city core which has a large population, significant number of high-risk properties, and high call volumes.

### **Costs**

- Relocation Costs - It is anticipated that the remaining three halls would need to be relocated. The cost and time to do so have not yet been calculated but would be substantive.

### **Area Rating**

- The reallocation of full-time firefighters from the career area to Val Therese would move this area from composite to a career service level supported by existing volunteers. The fire area rates would be modified as follows:
  - Volunteer - \$159.89 (no change)
  - Composite to Career – Increase from \$261.38 to \$356.46 (\$95.08 per year)
  - Career – Decrease from \$375.59 to \$356.46 (\$19.13 per year)

### **CONCLUSION**

The options outlined in this report will not result in the reduction of volunteer firefighters or the closure of a volunteer station in Valley East. The arbitration award is specific to the Val Therese Station and does not result in the introduction of full-time staffing in areas of the City currently operated by volunteer firefighters.

The three options presented in this report change the Fire Services' response capability, which can affect community risk. As well, these options influence the corporation's Property Tax Policy and taxes payable by property owners. The three options all introduce new risk, however, option one presents the least amount of risk.