



TOWNSHIP OF EDWARDSBURGH CARDINAL INFORMATION ITEM

Committee: Public Works Environmental Services Facilities

Date: April 19, 2021

Department: Fire

Topic: Regional Fire Services Review

Background:

On April 26, 2018, a workshop was held with the CAOs from the local municipalities to look strategically at fire services in Leeds and Grenville and receive input/feedback on potential opportunities, including a Counties-wide fire service. Dillon Consulting facilitated the workshop and consensus was achieved on the following courses of action:

1. Community Risk Assessment
2. Professional Qualifications and Standards Assessments
3. Services and Program Review
4. Effective Communications

A request by the Leeds and Grenville Fire Chiefs to have a representative participate in the workshop was declined.

Late in 2019, a Counties funding application to the municipal modernization program to complete a regional fire services review was approved. In order to meet the modernization program funding requirements, the items agreed to by the CAO's in 2018 were substituted with the following outcomes and objectives:

- Eliminate duplication/overlap of services where possible.
- Move towards the standardization of equipment and fleet, to permit competitive purchasing and ease of maintenance and operations.
- Develop consistent levels of services across Leeds and Grenville.
- Develop consistent policies and procedures of fire services in Leeds and Grenville, and
- Identify opportunities to reduce costs, such as sharing administration, training, specialized staff, specialized equipment and fleet, maintenance of fire services equipment, and procurement.

A committee of CAOs/City Managers was formed to evaluate the proposals, ultimately selecting Pomax Consulting as the successful firm. The committee subsequently agreed to remain involved in the study by sitting on the steering committee. A request for fire service members to sit on the steering committee resulted in an overwhelming response with almost every Fire Chief willing to participate. Unfortunately, after some delay, the Chiefs were informed that the fire service would not be represented on the steering committee. Instead, the committee would alternate weekly meetings between the steering committee and Fire Chiefs. While this format did allow regular meetings, it could not be considered a collaboration.

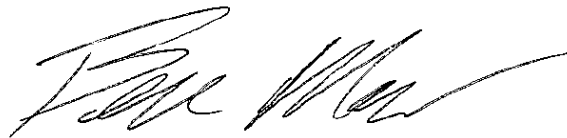
The Fire Chiefs and steering committee continued to meet on a somewhat regular basis from June – December 2020. Upon review of the draft report in January, the Fire Chiefs were unanimous in their support of the attached response that was sent to Pomax.

It is unfortunate that the report was written in a negative tone towards existing fire service efforts. The report, along with the resulting media coverage, distressed the very group of volunteers relied upon to provide fire protection services to our communities.

As stated in the response to Pomax, the Fire Chiefs believe some of the concepts warrant further investigation. Items such as:

- Fire Prevention/Education. (County committee already exists)
- Joint Procurement.
- Training/certification. (County committee already exists and OFC Regional training center located in Leeds 1000 Islands)
- Standardization of equipment/procedures where practical

Some of the above concepts may be successful County-wide, while others may be more effective at a local level. Fire protection services is a municipal responsibility, and as such, Council should consider allowing the Fire Chiefs an opportunity to explore these concepts in detail before endorsing the creation of a new Counties Fire Services Task Force.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Mc...', is written over a horizontal line.

Fire Chief