



# The Town of Deep River's **STRATEGIC FIRE PLAN**



## **CORE VALUES:**

- The Town of Deep River is committed to the safety of our residents, businesses and visitors by providing the most effective fire service possible.
- The Town of Deep River is equally committed to the safety and protection of all of our employees, including our front line staff in our Fire and Police Departments.
- The municipality takes the recommendations made by the Office of the Fire Marshall and Emergency Management (OFMEM) in terms of fire and life safety education, fire prevention and fire suppression services as they relate to public and firefighter safety very seriously.

## **PRIMARY CONCERN:**

The 2011 OFMEM Review deemed the Town's fire services to be inadequate.

"This review has identified that the Town of Deep River is not meeting its responsibilities in accordance with the provision of fire protection services as stated in Clauses 2 (1) (a) and 2 (1) (b) of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act.

In essence, the current fire suppression capability does not meet the needs and circumstances of the municipality. The Deep River Fire Service does not have the internal resources to effectively, efficiently and safely conduct fire suppression operations at a single family dwelling or at any higher risk occupancy."

The status quo is not an option!

As a result, Council contracted Dillon Consulting to provide a set of recommendations, in the interest of enhancing public safety, on how the Town of Deep River can deliver fire services more effectively and efficiently. The Dillon Report recommended that Deep River transition to a composite fire department.

## **THE CURRENT COMPLEMENT:**

The Deep River Fire Department currently consists of one fire chief, one captain and 8 full time firefighters who are represented by the Deep River Fire Fighters Association. There are 460 fire departments in the Province of Ontario and only 31 of them are entirely full time. Deep River is by far the smallest. As late as the 1980's, the full time force was supplemented by 16 part time firefighters to optimize public safety.

## **WHAT IS A COMPOSITE FIRE SERVICE?**

A composite fire service is one that is comprised of both full time and part time (volunteer) firefighters. Pembroke, Renfrew, Sudbury, Ottawa and Hamilton are all examples of a composite fire service. There are many such services of all different sizes, all across Ontario.

## **WILL A COMPOSITE FIRE SERVICE PROVIDE IMPROVED EMERGENCY RESPONSE?**

There is direct empirical evidence that leads us to believe a composite fire service will improve emergency response. Under the current model, two full time firefighters are on duty and available to respond to emergencies with up to seven others potentially available to be paged to respond. Under a composite fire service model recommended by the Dillon Report, up to 35 additional fully trained National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) certified on-call fire fighters will be available to immediately respond to emergency calls.

## **WHY HAS THE TOWN OF DEEP RIVER NOT IMPLEMENTED A COMPOSITE FIRE SERVICE?**

Article 27 (Contracting Out) of the collective agreement between the Town of Deep River and the Deep River Firefighters Association Local #1276 states "except to the extent and to the degree agreed upon by the parties, no work customarily performed by an employee covered by this agreement shall be performed by another employee of the Corporation or by a person who is not an employee of the Corporation." In other words, no part-time or on-call firefighters if the Association does not agree.

## **WHY WOULD THE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION NOT AGREE TO A COMPOSITE FORCE?**

### **WOULDN'T IT BE SAFER FOR EVERYONE?**

We have been in negotiations with our local fire fighters and their Ontario Professional Firefighters Association (OPFFA) Provincial Representative since December 2011. The Association has insisted on proposals that would result in a significant overall increase in the cost of fire services in Deep River. These proposals create further barriers to the use of part-time/on-call firefighters and effectively negate the value of their implementation. We remain hopeful the Association will modify their position for the betterment of our community.

## **WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG TO PUBLICLY RELEASE THE DILLON REPORT?**

We wanted to give the Deep River Firefighters Association the opportunity to review the report and hopefully reach a negotiated settlement to create the operating flexibility that the municipality requires going forward.

## **WHY RELEASE THE DILLON REPORT NOW?**

We have been unsuccessful in getting the Firefighters Association to resume discussions at the negotiating table. Their contract with the municipality expired on December

31st, 2011. In an effort to move negotiations to a conclusion, the Town suggested that negotiations focus solely on wages and benefits and that the larger operational issues be moved forward to the next round of collective bargaining to begin in the spring of 2015. This would allow the parties to be better positioned, with a signed contract in hand, to have open and frank discussions on the issue of a composite fire fighting service.

The Association attached conditions to further discussions that were not acceptable to the Town as these conditions were contrary to the Town's objective of long term operational change that is necessary for the sustainability of the Fire Service.

As such, the Town believes it is now appropriate for the Dillon Report to be released, so the residents of Deep River are better aware of the issues facing the Fire Service and the reasons why the Town is seeking the changes we are in collective bargaining while at the same time providing the Town's residents the opportunity to provide comment and feedback to Council.

## **WHERE CAN I ACCESS THE DILLON REPORT?**

It is available on line on the Town of Deep River website [www.deepriver.ca](http://www.deepriver.ca). Limited hard copies are available at the Deep River Town Hall and the Deep River Public Library.

## **WHAT NEXT?**

The Town of Deep River and the Deep River Firefighter's Association are scheduled for Interest Arbitration on October 6th and 7th which is a public hearing process. In the meantime, Council will be actively engaging our local citizens to receive their feedback and opinions.

## **WHY GO TO INTEREST ARBITRATION?**

The status quo is not acceptable. We MUST augment our personnel to better protect our residents and our employees. When negotiations break down, the next step as required by law is mediation. Mediation with the firefighters Association broke off after a single meeting. As a result, Interest Arbitration is the final step in the process for the Town. The decision of the Arbitration Board will be binding on all parties.

## **WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF GOING TO ARBITRATION?**

It is of paramount importance the Arbitrator provides the Town of Deep River with the tools necessary to establish the level of fire service that is desired and required by the residents of our municipality.