



GEORGINA

Subject: Georgina and East Gwillimbury Joint Fire Services Assessment Update

To: Mayor and Council

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Briefing:

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide Council with an update on the overall progress of the Joint Fire Services Assessment undertaken in collaboration with the Town of East Gwillimbury (EG).

A Municipal Modernization grant funding was approved in January 2022 for \$356,160 to undertake this assessment.

The provincial funding criteria required that municipalities retain a third-party expert to conduct the review. In May of this year, the Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) was retained to provide specialized fire and EMS consulting services. ESCI is an internationally recognized firm offering extensive expertise and experience in the review of related service delivery and modernization evaluations.

The objectives of the project are to determine efficiencies and modernization opportunities under the terms of the Office of the Fire Marshal's Three Lines of Defense:

- Public Fire Safety Education;
- Fire Safety Standards and Enforcement; and,
- Emergency Response.

The analysis of this project encompasses exploration of three scenarios for cost efficient and effective Fire and Emergency Services (FES) delivery:

1. modernized standalone departments;
2. shared service delivery model(s); and,
3. a consolidated composite department model.

A comparative analysis of the three options is to be undertaken, complete with implementation strategies for all options.

Progress to date

In the initial stages, a project framework and a detailed work plan were prepared.

Data collection was undertaken by both departments (e.g. asset information, financial data, internal/external agreements, etc.).

In total, more than 50 virtual and in-person interviews and group discussions were arranged for the project consultants to seek input from a wide range of stakeholders:

- 14 members of both Town Councils
- 12 senior staff members
- 13 Fire Department management members, administrative staff, training and prevention staff
- Full-time and paid on-call/volunteer focus group discussions (four meetings)
- Association representatives
- 9 external agencies

In addition, public information meetings were held for each community (June 28 in East Gwillimbury and June 29 in Georgina). The sessions were livestreamed and the recordings have been posted on the Town's website.

For the purposes of seeking further public input in a convenient manner, an online survey was prepared and released in advance of the public information meetings. The survey remained open until the end of July and resulted in 100 responses for EG and 137 responses for Georgina being collected.

In late June, representatives from ESCI were present for a three-day site visit. This in-person engagement was intended to provide the consultants with an opportunity for site tours to assess first-hand the fire stations, equipment, technology and local geography.

This allowed the consultants to gauge the overall operations of each department.

Next Steps

The work by the consultant on the refresh of the Fire Master Plans is underway, along with the continuing analysis of the three options as noted above.

The final project report will be presented to Council in January 2023.