



Media Release

9 July, 2018

Changes in Leadership at the Township of Lanark Highlands Fire Service.

I wish to respond to the dissemination of misinformation that has been circulating. It is important that the Township ensure that residents have the facts. Although there have been a few recent changes in the leadership of the Fire Service, there has been no negative impact to the Fire Service or the safety of the residents of Lanark Highlands.

This is an unfortunate circumstance and these difficult decisions made by the Township's Administration were made in accordance with Township Policies, the Establishing and Regulating By-law (E&R) as well as the Fire Service Code of Conduct (which every member of the Fire Service has read and signed). However, I fully support the decisions and can assure you that the appropriate process was followed.

There is also misinformation circulating about "cuts" to the Fire Service budget as well as changes to the training curriculum involving certification. Firstly, the Township office is working with the Ontario Fire Marshall's Office to understand the logistics of achieving the required certifications including the timelines that are being imposed on municipalities by the Province as well as identifying the budget implications.

In the case of our Fire Service Budget, it has increased by 12.1% from 2014 – 2018. (\$185,500 was allocated to reserves, \$124,000 to Major Capital, \$26,300 for Members Outsourced Training, \$190,000 for Remuneration). As part of the continuing effort to bring the firefighting equipment and training up to date, the 2018 budget (Available on the Township Website) provides for the following:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): \$55,000 for the purchase of Bunker gear and Wildland boots this year plus \$15,000 to be added to the reserve for future purchases
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA): \$71,500 to be added to the reserve for the replacement of the SCBA's anticipated cost of \$334,400 (\$11,147 per unit). This will bring the balance of the reserve to \$193,000 at the end of 2018 and if the contributions continue there will be sufficient funds for the planned replacement in 2020.
- Hoses: \$4,000 has been added to the reserve for hose replacement and \$8,000 has been allocated for expenditure in 2018 leaving a balance of \$10,000 at the end of 2018.

- Vehicles and Apparatus: \$95,000 has been added to the Vehicle and Apparatus reserve and \$100,000 has been allocated for expenditure in 2018 for potential acquisitions. The balance of the reserve will be \$697,171 at the end of 2018 for the replacement of an aging fleet.
- Dry Hydrants: \$16,000 has been allocated for new dry hydrants at Tatlock and Roberstson Lake
- Training (Outsourced) – \$26,300 for training such as chainsaw training, CPR/First Aid, NFPA 1001, NFPA 1002, WHMIS, text books, etc.

Lastly, I would like to add that all employee/personnel concerns are confidential to protect the privacy of employee or employees who may have been involved. The Township must abide by Ontario's Privacy Act and accordingly we cannot release sensitive information to the public related to this matter. We would also request that individuals refrain from making disparaging remarks and threats to staff and Council as we have a zero tolerance for bullying and harassment in the workplace. The Township has strived to create an inclusive, friendly, workplace for staff.

One final point, the Township is in the process of implementing a new organizational structure for the Fire Service as a result of the approval by Council of the revised "Establishing and Regulating" By-Law. While change is always difficult, it is inevitable in any organization. I am pleased that many of our volunteer firefighters and officers have stepped forward and voiced their support for these changes and their willingness to take on greater responsibilities in the days ahead. I wish to thank our Fire Service members for their patience and their continued commitment to the safety of the people of Lanark Highlands.

Brian Stewart,

Mayor, Lanark Highlands