

Fire & Rescue Services

Service Enhancement

Fire Suppression

Description:

In 2023, Prince George Fire Rescue Services presented to Council, during a Committee of the Whole, a detailed 5-year strategic plan for staffing. The presentation summarized previous reports to Council in 2015, 2022 and 2023, highlighting prioritized recommendations to enhance the fire rescue services delivered to the citizens of Prince George. The 5-year plan was supported by the previous recommendations, and significant increases in incident responses since 2015. The total number of incident responses has more than doubled since that time (5,121), with Prince George Fire Rescue Services responding to 10,535 calls for service in 2023 and 10,132 in 2024.

2015 serves as a benchmark for evaluating fire service performance in Prince George as it was this year that the City became aware that fire services staffing levels were not meeting the standards set out in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 which is the guideline that recommends the minimum number of firefighters required on scene for various types of incidents. NFPA is a U.S. based non-profit organization that develops codes and standards for fire, electrical and life safety around the world. There is no Canadian equivalent for NFPA 1710 so Canadian municipalities can use it as a benchmark for fire department service levels but it is not a mandatory standard. Due to the layout of our community, Prince George Fire Rescue Services is not always able to meet the NFPA 1710 standard for residential structure fires, particularly when units are responding from outlying fire halls. Additionally, our service often does not meet the recommended staffing and response benchmarks for larger structure fires, including those involving multi-unit residential, commercial, or industrial buildings, where more personnel and resources are required to effectively manage the incident.

During the 2024 budget deliberations, Year 1 of the 5-year staffing plan was discussed and Council approved 70% of the proposed increase, adding 5 of the 7 requested positions. In the original plan, Year 2 recommended adding 10 firefighters; however, to maintain fiscal responsibility, the request was reduced by 50% to 5 positions. The remaining (7) positions were treated as deferred to be carried forward as part of future service enhancement requests. In Year 3 (2026), the report recommends the addition of 10 firefighter positions. In addition, the department is also requesting the 2 remaining positions from Year 1 (2024) that were previously deferred. This would result in a total of 12 new firefighters being hired in 2026. If approved in full, this would bring the City closer to the original staffing plan, with a short fall of only 5 positions remaining.

These positions will support cross staffing the existing platform ladder truck and medical unit. With these additions, Prince George Fire Rescue Services will be 3 positions per platoon closer to meeting the staffing recommendations outlined in NFPA 1710 and will gain the ability to strategically deploy a platform ladder truck and light fleet medic unit to selected incident response, improving public safety, operational efficiency and response capability.

Financial Cost of Enhancement:

Option A: Recruitment of 12 New Firefighters

12 recruit firefighters will be hired at a cost of \$112,354 per member (inclusive of wages and benefits at the 2024 rate in the most recent IAFF Collective Agreement). An additional \$20,000 per member is allocated for training, personal protective equipment (PPE), and clothing, bringing the total cost per firefighter to \$132,354. Once recruit training is completed, staffing levels will allow for 3 full-time positions per platoon to be assigned to the platform ladder truck and medic unit, enabling full-time deployment of these resources. This investment supports enhanced public safety, emergency response capacity and marks meaningful progress toward meeting NFPA 1710. Additionally, it largely puts the five-year staffing plan on track, aligning with the original timeline and strategic intent.

Total Estimated Cost: **\$1,588,248**

Option B: Recruitment of 7 New Firefighters

Under this second option, 7 recruit firefighters will be hired at a cost of \$112,354 per member (covering wages and benefits). An additional \$20,000 per member is allocated for training, personal protective equipment (PPE), and clothing, bringing the total recruitment cost per firefighter to \$132,354. Upon completion of recruit training, staffing levels will support 2 full-time positions per platoon on the platform ladder truck and medic unit, allowing partial deployment of these specialized resources. This option represents a more cost-conscious approach while still contributing toward improved public safety, increased emergency response capacity and incremental progress toward NFPA 1710.

Total Estimated Cost: **\$926,478**

Measurement of Service Level Increase:

Strengthened staffing will enable more efficient and strategic medical aid response, reducing the demand on frontline apparatus, providing increased availability for nonmedical emergencies. Either of these enhancement options will support incremental progress toward meeting NFPA 1710 standards for structure fire response.

Key metrics to evaluate the success of this enhancement include:

- Reduction in medical calls requiring frontline apparatus response in Hall 1/2 as well as remote areas.
- Increased availability and readiness of frontline units for fire and rescue incidents.
- Progress toward NFPA 1710 recommended staffing levels.
- Reduced maintenance and repairs on front line apparatus.