



MUNICIPALITY OF THAMES CENTRE

REPORT NO. **CAO-007-24**

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Chief Administrative Officer
MEETING DATE: July 15, 2024
SUBJECT: **Remuneration for Volunteer Fire Services**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CAO-007-24 be **RECEIVED** for information;

AND THAT Council **APPROVE** a \$1.00 rate increase for 2024;

AND THAT any further adjustments to Remuneration for Volunteer Fire Services be **REFERRED** to the 2025 budget process.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is for Council to receive a comparison of compensation from similar Municipalities for Volunteer Fire Services and consider any adjustments to be made and/or referred to the upcoming 2025 Budget process.

BACKGROUND:

The Municipality of Thames Centre last completed a Compensation Review for Volunteer Fire Services in 2017.

The Municipality of Thames Centre has a compensation program where each position is assigned to a particular pay schedule based upon a first-class firefighter wage and for emergency response. The Municipality conducts a comprehensive compensation review every three years to guarantee pay equity and fair compensation for its non-unionized staff, which should also be implemented for the Fire Service as per the approved 2024 Fire Master Plan.

ML Consulting has reviewed the Volunteer Fire Services compensation along with other pay groups for Thames Centre. The consultant's mandate is to update the current compensation program and related outputs to ensure pay equity compliance and establish a competitive salary structure for Thames Centre.



There is no uniform method of compensation in the municipal sector for the Volunteer Fire Service; some municipalities pay hourly rates, others pay on points, others use stipends/honorariums, and some use a combination of these elements of pay.

Thames Centre's Volunteer Fire Service is paid on a point system, with officers receiving additional annual stipends/honorariums.

1 point = \$25.00

Emergencies = 2 points for the first hour; 1 point for each additional hour or part thereof

Non-Emergencies and Training = 1 point per hour or part thereof

Honorariums: District Chief \$3,500; Deputy District Chief \$3,500; Captain/Training Officer \$1,500; Acting Captain/Fire Investigator \$1,000; Committee Chair \$500

The current review includes a comprehensive analysis of the market for comparable positions in similar municipalities and an assessment of compliance with pay equity legislation. The review encompassed market data collected from Fire Service that uses hourly base rates for all positions. Four comparators were selected considering the size and scope of service, geographic location and proximity to the 401 corridor: King, Puslinch, Port Hope and Hamilton Township were comparators.

COMMENTS:

Thames Centre's approach to pay is based on fairness, compliance, competitiveness, and performance.

Currently, the minimum pay rate for Volunteer Suppression Firefighters in Thames Centre is below the average market rate, despite offering double payment for the first hour of attendance.

To assist in addressing this, it is recommended to raise the minimum pay rate from \$25.00 to \$26.00 for 2024. It is also recommended to introduce a pay structure for Officer positions based on a percentage of the First-Class Firefighter rate, which is a standard practice in the Ontario Fire Service, which can be further developed as part of the 2025 Budget process.

Compensation is important for attracting, keeping, and motivating employees. A review by ML Consulting recommended Thames Centre target the 60th percentile of the market average, which is reflected in the Proposed 2025 Pay Schedule for Volunteer Fire Service, after evaluating and rating jobs and confirming their fairness through market research.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Volunteer Fire Services are paid once per year in December. Any financial implications on adjusting \$1 have already been considered as part of the approved 2024 Budget, therefore, there are no new financial implications with approving this increase and referring any further adjustments to the 2025 budget process.

STRATEGIC PLAN LINK

Pillar: Sustainability

Goal: To ensure that the Municipality upholds fiscal prudence while concurrently maintaining taxation levels that are both affordable and sustainable.

CONSULTATION:

Marianne Love, Principal Consultant, ML Consulting
Anica Peter, HR Manager
Nick Dorken, Director of Fire & Emergency Services/Fire Chief
Emily Schinbein, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

Presentation: *Municipality of Thames Centre 2024 Compensation Review for Volunteer Fire Service* - prepared and presented by ML Consulting

Prepared by: D. Barrick, Chief Administrative Officer