

**To: David Creery, Chief Administrative Officer**  
**From: Jeff Slager, Fire Chief**  
**Re: Fire Department Minimum Staffing Increase**

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## **AIM**

The purpose of this staff report is to request Council approval to increase the daily minimum staffing level in the Woodstock Fire Department Suppression Division from nine (9) to ten (10).

## **BACKGROUND**

The Woodstock Fire Department Suppression Division currently operates with 52 firefighters on four (4) platoons of thirteen (13) firefighters. Minimum daily staffing for a platoon had been at eight (8) since 2006 until Council increased it to nine (9) in September 2023.

In February 2023, Council received the staff report *Fire Department Staffing Plan* which recommended increasing Suppression Division staffing to at least 52 firefighters in July 2023 and to at least 56 firefighters in July 2024. The staff report also recommended that upon the new firefighters being operational on-shift Council increase the Suppression Division staffing from eight (8) persons to nine (9) persons in 2023 and from nine (9) to ten (10) in 2024.

In both March 2023 and March 2024, as part of the City Operating Budget approval, Council approved the hiring of four (4) additional firefighter positions in the Suppression Division, in alignment with the staff report.

From July 2 to August 23, 2024, the latest group of recruits completed an intense training program that was able to incorporate all required testing and evaluations needed to facilitate them being placed with their platoon, and as of their graduation on August 23, 2024, they are classified as being operational on-shift.

## **COMMENT**

The latest recruit program was again able to complete the comprehensive training program which had been developed in 2023 and ensures all recruits have been trained and evaluated on all skills needed to operate effectively on-shift.

We continue to permit not more than two (2) Suppression Division staff to schedule time off during a tour of duty. With the current staffing level of thirteen (13) firefighters per platoon this leaves a “buffer” of two staff above the minimum staffing level of nine (9). If

the requested move to a minimum staffing level of ten (10) is approved, there will be no change at present to the number of approved staff off in the Suppression Division. This ensures the two staff “buffer” will remain.

#### Financial Consideration

As per the January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, rate of pay, each full-time probationary firefighter has an annual salary of \$66,927, plus benefits. The current collective agreement expires on December 31, 2024.

There is no additional financial impact directly associated with the move from a minimum staffing of nine (9) to ten (10). This move does not affect wage classification nor benefit requirements for staff. Further, it is anticipated there will be no additional impact to overtime costs to maintain the requested new minimum staffing level.

#### **SUMMARY**

Raising the minimum staffing in the Suppression Division from nine (9) to ten (10) allows the Woodstock Fire Department to achieve the Ontario Fire Marshal’s (OFM) published recommendation of ten (10) firefighters on scene within ten (10) minutes and there is projected to be no additional financial impact.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approve the increase of minimum staffing within the Woodstock Fire Department Suppression Division from nine (9) to ten (10) effective September 9, 2024.

*Authored by:*            *Jeff Slager, Fire Chief*

*Approved by:*         David Creery, M.B.A., P. Eng., Chief Administrative Officer