

*1) It is my understanding that over 100 volunteers helped during the Porter's Lake fire. How would Fire Services address an emergency such as this with such a substantially reduced compliment of volunteers as suggested?*

The Porter's Lake fire was a great example of how important it is to have a strong compliment of volunteer firefighters, spanning the entire municipality. In this example, the majority of volunteers came from rural stations, where there is no plan to reduce numbers. In fact, quite the opposite. The goal is to boost volunteer numbers through various initiatives in the rural parts of our municipality because that's where we need people the most. Any kind of major incident that spans several days would require a strong reliance on our very dedicated volunteers.

*2) Were other options considered in regard to the reduction of volunteers?*

This issue was evaluated from all angles. HRFE staff analyzed whether it made sense to keep the status quo or eliminate the urban volunteer compliment all together. Ultimately, it made sense to keep two 'flying squad' teams on opposite sides of the harbour to maximize their usefulness. When looking at the current level of active volunteers in our urban core, there doesn't appear to be much of a need to actually eliminate many volunteer positions. An 'active' volunteer is someone who, in the past year, attended a minimum of 20 per cent of emergency calls.

*3) Why has it been allowed that volunteers by in large feel underutilized and under-appreciated?*

It is not HRFE's intention for volunteers to feel underutilized or under-appreciated. In fact, the objective of streamlining the number of urban volunteers is to have a stronger sense of belonging amongst the remaining firefighters by creating the opportunity to be more productive and useful as first-responders. Once Council has made a decision on the Operational Review recommendations, senior staff will engage the volunteers through the Board of Chiefs to ensure everyone is aware of steps being taken to better utilize the extremely dedicated urban volunteers.

*4) How many volunteer applications do we currently have on file?*

There are currently no applications on file from people who want to volunteer in the urban core. HRFE is awaiting direction from Regional Council before moving forward on any major decisions relating to the volunteer compliment at urban stations. Recruitment efforts are continuing for rural stations.

*5) It is proposed that volunteers be reduced to 2 groups of 20 each. What is the plan as to how they would be utilized if this plan was approved?*

Senior staff at HRFE will engage volunteers through the Board of Chiefs once Regional Council makes decisions on the various recommendations in the Operational Review. That consultation with the volunteers will be critical in determining what model works best for the urban stations.

*6) May we see a copy of the Fire Underwriter's Survey (FUS) report? Was it ever completed?*

HRFE has yet to receive a final version of the Fire Underwriters Survey.

*7) It has been suggested that career members have been reduced 21% since 2006. Is that accurate?*

This is not accurate. The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) union positions has not been reduced. In fact, the approved number has increased from 419 in 2006 to 441 in 2015.

Two and a half years ago a review was done of the senior management ranks and the Assistant Deputy Chief level was eliminated (three positions). Three other senior management positions were also eliminated (two Division Chiefs and one District Chief), resulting in a 25 per cent reduction of the upper management team.

*8) Is there a committee that is referred to as: Volunteer Fire Fighter's Advisory Committee? Who serves on this?*

Yes, it is known as the Volunteer Firefighter's Advisory Committee (VFAC). Its purpose is to bring volunteer concerns forward to senior management. The committee includes two representatives from each division (10 in total) along with the Volunteer Program Manager. The committee is made up of a combination of volunteer officers and firefighters. Two councillors, (Coun. Hendsbee and Coun. Dalrymple) regularly attend the meetings in a non-voting capacity.

*9) Page 3 of the report refers to a steering committee struck by the Chief to undertake a review of HRFE Operations and develop a Master Fire Plan. Who (name) served on this under each category and how many times did they meet?*

The steering committee included Chief Doug Trussler, Deputy Chief Brian Gray, Deputy Chief Roy Hollett, Executive Officer Phil McNulty, Composite Chief Dave Raymer from Harrietsfield (Station #62) and Sambro (Station #63), Volunteer Chief John Lowe from Moser River (Station #29), as well as firefighter Chris Camp and firefighter John Bowser. Throughout the process input was also provided by the Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP.

The selection of the volunteer representatives was through nomination and vote by the volunteer Station Chiefs at an All Chiefs meeting. The selection of the career representatives was made by the firefighters' union. The steering committee met on an almost monthly basis over two years.

*10) In regard to the proposed closing of King St. it is suggested that West St could be one of the responders to Dartmouth Downtown. What is the response time from this station?*

The travel time from the West Street fire station (Station #3) to downtown Dartmouth is 3.4 kilometres or a travel time of four minutes. However, five-minute travel time targets were calculated without considering any kind of access over either bridge.

In other words, HRFE believes both bridges could be out of commission at the same time and the department is still confident response time targets would continue to be met (90 per cent of the time) if the King Street (Station #13) station was decommissioned. Response time conclusions were only reached after looking at same-side-of-the-harbour data and mapping.

In the case of the King Street catchment area, these calculations were based on travel-time responses from Highfield Park (Station #12), Second Street (Station #14), and Pleasant Street (Station #15).