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**Halifax Regional Council**  
**March 8, 2005**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** February 21, 2005

**SUBJECT:** **Fire - Two Tactical/Air Support Units**

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**ORIGIN**

Staff

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Regional Council approve an increase to the 2004/05 Capital Budget in the amount of \$200,000 for 2 new projects, to be split equally between Fire-Tactical Support Unit - Zone 1 (Lawrencetown) and Fire-Tactical Support Unit - Zone 3 (Middle Musquodoboit). Funding is available as a withdrawal from the Rural Fire Reserve (Q128).

**BACKGROUND**

As a result of aging vehicles and recent mechanical issues in Fire Zone 1, and the absence of Mobile Air Support in Fire Zone 3, the Rural Fire Air Supply Program has identified the need for the purchase of 2 cube vans with a cascade system (large capacity air bottles that can fill many of the standard firefighter air packs). Firefighters cannot do interior firefighting without adequate air supply.

**DISCUSSION**

The vehicles being requested are the most important units in rural areas for supporting operations and enhancing firefighter safety.

The purpose of these vehicles is to provide rescue and air supply units that have the ability to provide breathing air anywhere within the zone and refill Breathing Apparatus at a fire scene/emergency. Currently, volunteers must drive up to 45 minutes one way to refill bottles that only last 20 minutes when used at a fire scene or in any emergency situation. This severely restricts their ability to fight fires and increases the risk to the volunteers both at the scene and while transporting the air. The transport of filled bottles falls under the Transport of Dangerous Goods Act. Risk is lowered with an on-site fill truck. These units provide an effective and efficient use of resources by having the truck on the scene rather than sending volunteers back and forth.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

Based on an increase to the 2004/05 Capital Budget of \$200,000 for 2 new projects, Fire-Tactical Support Unit - Zone 1 and Fire-Tactical Support Unit - Zone 3, funding is available from the Rural Fire Reserve (Q128). This has been confirmed by Financial Services.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating budget, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation. If approved, this will increase the 2004/05 Capital Budget and the withdrawals from Reserves.

**ALTERNATIVES**

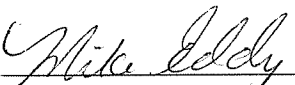
The only alternative is to purchase spare air bottles and pickup trucks and have the volunteers transport them to a fill station with a compressor to fill them and then back to the fire scene. The cost savings of this alternative is relatively minimal when factoring the potential liability of not having enough air on scene to support safe internal aggressive attack. In addition, the travel hazards of transporting air bottles long distances along with the increased time needed from volunteer firefighters make this option less practical. This is not the recommended alternative.


**ATTACHMENTS**

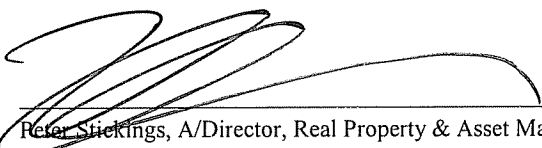
None

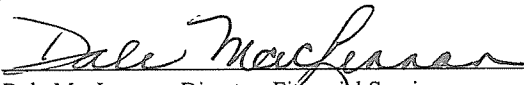
Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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