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Halifax Regional Council
November 14, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


Bill Mosher, Acting Chief Director Fire & Emergency Service

DATE: November 1, 2006

SUBJECT: Honorariums - Fire Volunteers

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Council has requested a report on honorariums paid to volunteers in Fire Services to determine whether the level of compensation is comparable to that paid in other jurisdictions.

BACKGROUND

A survey of Canadian Municipalities indicates that there are two forms of compensation paid for volunteer services. In Eastern Canada, volunteers are paid an honorarium, while in Western Canada volunteers are paid an hourly rate.

In either case, the total compensation paid appears to be very similar when compared on an hourly compensation basis.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the cross -Canada survey, the value of the honorariums paid to volunteers with HRM Fire Services appears to be consistent with average compensation provided volunteers in other Fire Services across Canada. While some may be higher, others are lower.

To maintain this placement, Fire Services, in conjunction with Human Resources, will provide for regular reviews of the level of payment for honorariums, and include the required funding in future budget plans.

No adjustment is required in the 2006 budget.

There are two issues of concern to Fire Services with respect to Honorariums paid to volunteers:

- A) Equity between volunteers in the core and rural areas: The honorarium process for Core stations was consolidated in 2000 to create one pool for Core members. In 2004 rural honorariums were consolidated, forming a second pool. Efforts have been made to bring about a further consolidation into one pool but due to the variations in the data collection methods this has not been resolved. To achieve equity without de-motivating volunteers will require a substantial increase in the money available for a single consolidated pool.
- B) The role of honorariums in attracting and retaining volunteers: The primary reason people volunteer as fire fighters is to help their community. However, honorariums are an important aspect of retaining volunteers. There are substantial personal costs to being a volunteer, such as time away from family for training and meetings, time responding to calls at all hours of the day and night, time and wages lost from work because of deployment at emergency scenes, and fuel costs getting to and from department activities. Honorariums do not fully compensate for these losses, but they do show the members and their families that their sacrifices are appreciated by the community.

It is the intention of Fire Services to begin addressing the equity issue in conjunction with the 2007/8 Business Planning Budget process.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

No implications for the current budget year.

Future budget allocations for Honorariums for Fire Services volunteers will increase in line with wage inflation generally across our labour market, and with the need to address equity issues.

Core Honorariums	250,000
Rural Honorariums	410,000
Rural Stipends	204,000
<u>Core Stipends</u>	<u>8,500</u>
Total	873,000

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES


Council could consider moving to a wage rate based on hours of service, but this is not the norm in Eastern Canada at this time.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

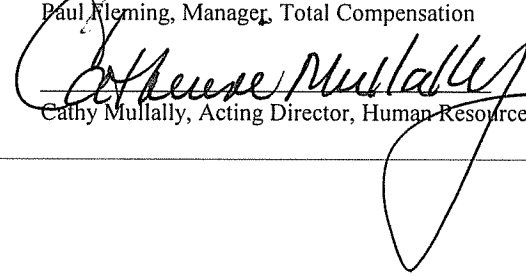
Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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490-5099

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490-6468