



**GRAND VALLEY**

## **STAFF REPORT**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Meghan Townsend, CAO/Clerk  
**Meeting Date:** November 26, 2024  
**Report Number:** **2024-106**  
**Subject:** Response to Dufferin County's Fire Modernization Plan

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### **Recommendation**

**THAT** Council receive Report – Response to Dufferin County's Fire Modernization Plan, **AND FURTHER THAT** Council express to the County their support for their preferred recommendation(s) arising from the Dufferin County Multi-Jurisdictional Fire Prevention and Protection Modernization Plan, and give direction to our County Representatives on Grand Valley's wishes for the discussion to follow.

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### **Executive Summary**

#### **Purpose**

To provide Council with recommendations for responding to the County of Dufferin regarding their Multi-Jurisdictional Fire Prevention and Protection Modernization Plan.

#### **Key Findings**

All other Dufferin municipalities have provided their response to the recommendations presented in the Plan. Grand Valley's response is pending.

#### **Financial Implications**

None.

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## Report

### Background

At the September 24, 2024 meeting, Council received Dufferin County’s Multi-Jurisdictional Fire Prevention and Protection Modernization Plan. The Plan presented County Council with 4 options to consider:

- Option 1: County-Run Fire Department (Single Department)
- Option 2: Single Fire Department (Orangeville) for the Entire County
- Option 3: Municipal Operations (municipally-run departments, not through boards)
- Option 4: Status Quo with Recommendations

In their conclusion, the consultants stated the following:

“All the options presented have their respective benefits and challenges. Although EMG has identified a fourth option for maintaining the status quo, we are not recommending it. The ongoing inconsistencies with the FSBs appear to be the primary concern during EMGs review and interviews with municipal and fire staff.

Similarly, option three retains many of the current challenges and places a significant burden on small municipalities with limited administrative infrastructure.

During EMGs review of the Community Risk Assessments, inconsistencies were observed in which some of the risks are being addressed. These appear to arise from the varied governance of way fire services by the FSBs and individual towns. To resolve these challenges, there needs to be a unified system in place, allowing CAOs, Fire Chiefs, and Councils to exercise direct control over the services provided to their communities.

Currently, the situation is fragmented; some communities operate under FSBs, others have fire service agreements, and some have a combination of both. Only Orangeville has a municipally operated fire service.

The FSBs have played a crucial role in the fire service over the years and have served their communities effectively. However, as regulations and legislation requirements increase, reducing the number of governance organizations could lead to a more efficient and effective fire service for each community. This approach would not diminish the importance of town councils or their involvement in providing fire services to their communities.

EMG’s opinion is that a single operational model should be adopted, based on the recommendations previously proposed. This would establish a more defined reporting and operational system for all parties involved, consistency of fire operations and fire prevention, and improved accountability.”

Upon receipt of the Plan, County Council’s resolution was as follows:

“THAT the report from the Chief Administrative Officer, dated September 12, 2024, regarding a Fire Protection and Prevention Review, be received;

AND THAT Multi-Jurisdictional Fire Prevention and Protection Modernization Plan Report be forwarded to all Dufferin local municipalities and fire boards for their consideration;

AND THAT comments from the local municipalities be brought back to Council by end of year to decide next steps.”

Upon receipt of the County’s resolution and a review of the Plan, Town Council passed the following resolution:

Resolution: 2024-09-37

Moved by: J. Jonker Seconded by: P. Latam

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receives the Dufferin County Resolution and Dufferin County Multi-Jurisdictional Fire Prevention and Protection Modernization Plan; AND FURTHER THAT Council requests that the Fire Board review the Report and advise the Councils of their preferred recommendation by the beginning of December, 2024.

CARRIED

### **Discussion**

At the time of writing, no response from the Grand Valley and District Fire Board had been received. However, in discussion with the other municipal CAOs, their Councils have each passed their own response and have or will be forwarding this response to the County for inclusion in the County’s December 12 meeting agenda for discussion at County Council. Some respondents are interested in investigating the single operation model. Others want to dissolve boards and have the fire services become departments of the municipality in which the service is currently physically located. It appeared that Grand Valley was the only municipality that had not stated a position on the matter.

Therefore, this report is presented to Council as an item of Unfinished Business. If Council wishes to submit an opinion for discussion at County Council, it should be made at this meeting to be sent to the County for their December 12 meeting (agenda to come out December 5). If Council does not wish to submit an opinion, this decision should also be communicated to County Council. If the Grand Valley and District Fire Board review the Plan at an upcoming board meeting and have recommendations, the County could receive those recommendations as well for inclusion in their discussions.

### **Financial Impact**

While there is no direct financial impact as a result of this report, any decision regarding the fire operations will have impacts on the local taxpayer and municipal budgets. The cost of administering a fire service have grown significantly, are continuing to grow, and

the expectations placed on a fire service have also changed significantly. If the fire service operations were to become a County responsibility, the costs to run fire services will transfer to the County budget, paid for by local taxpayers on their property tax bill. It may appear to free up room in the local budget, but the taxpayer will still pay for this service. If operations are fully managed by Orangeville, the same will apply, but the money will be collected by the Town instead of the County, then paid to Orangeville under whatever agreement or type of levy/service charge is created. Currently, Grand Valley has Fire Service costs in our budget and this will not change if options 2, 3 or 4 are selected.

**Consultations**

None

**Attachments**

Attachment 1 - Dufferin County Multi-Jurisdictional Fire Prevention and Protection Modernization Plan

**This report was submitted by**

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**This report was approved by**

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