



## Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON  
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### City Council approves hiring of four new firefighters in 2023

City Council has taken the next step in implementing Vernon Fire Rescue Service's (VFRS) *Eight Year Strategic Plan* by approving the hiring of four new firefighters this year. Not only does the approval meet the timeline of the Strategic Plan, but it will also enhance capacity of the department at a time when First Responders are facing increased response demand for fires and the opioid crisis.

"The safety of our residents is always a top priority for City Council, and as our community continues to grow, so must our emergency services," said Mayor Victor Cumming. "That's why Council is supportive of Fire Rescue Service's careful, focused and strategic approach to increasing capacity and resources for the department through sustained investments in staffing, equipment, fire apparatus and management."

The new firefighter positions will be funded from unspent operating dollars, between June 2023 and May 2024, at a cost of up to \$460,000. In June 2024, the positions will become funded from taxation, with an increase of approximately \$240,000 in the 2024 budget and an additional \$260,000 in the 2025 budget.

By using a tiered funding approach, the City is able to meet the staffing objectives of the plan and increase department capacity, while also lessening the impact on taxpayers by introducing two smaller budget increases over the course of two years, instead of one larger increase in a single year.

"We want to thank City Council for its continued commitment to safety in our community," said Fire Chief David Lind. "Since the implementation of the Strategic Plan in 2018, a long list of accomplishments has been realized to modernize resources and improve service for Vernon's residents and visitors. This is thanks to the support and investment of our current and previous Councils."

Since 2018, fulfillment of the plan has included:

- an investment of more than \$4.1 million in mainly vehicles and equipment;
- an increase of operational budget from \$5.4 million in 2017 to \$7.9 million in 2023 (a \$2.5 million increase); and
- an increase of 12 new firefighter positions over the term of the plan.

In 2023, a Fire Services and Emergency Management Review will be conducted by an independent third-party consultant to assess the current status of the division. That review will be used to inform the next strategic plan which is expected to be ready for Council's consideration in 2024 with implementation beginning in 2025.

Development of the strategic plan will include public and employee consultation, and will consider legislation, bylaws, professional standards and best practices for Fire Rescue Services in Canada.