



Corporate Report

DEPARTMENT/ DIVISION	City Manager's Office Emergency Medical Services	REPORT NO.	2002.277
DATE PREPARED	September 11, 2002	FILE NO.	
MEETING DATE	September 23, 2002		
SUBJECT	Relocation of Shabaqua Station		

REPORT SUMMARY

To outline alternatives and recommend a new location for the delivery of emergency medical services in the Shabaqua region of the District of Thunder Bay.

BACKGROUND

The Shabaqua station came into being in 1995 when the local First Response Team was upgraded to volunteer ambulance service status. From 1995 till January 1, 2001, the service was operated by Atikokan General Hospital. When the City of Thunder Bay assumed its responsibilities as Designated Delivery Agent, the Shabaqua station became direct delivery.

The location was an older police station with a house and garage on the same property. It was being provided by Ontario Realty Corporation for use as an Emergency Medical Services station. A lease agreement did not exist and the buildings were being used by Superior North EMS since January 2001 at no cost.

On October 25th, 2001 a transport truck went off the road and hit the garage component of the station demolishing it. From that date till June of 2002, the staff used the house as a base and the IMOS garage across the road to store the ambulance. During the summer months, IMOS advised that they needed the garage for their purposes. The ambulance has been stored outside since then.

A major construction project to widen the roadway approach to the adjacent bridge will make the use of the house more hazardous. The speed of vehicular traffic is expected to increase and being on a hill and a curve, staff will be exposed to more risk when leaving for an emergency. This construction project will continue until winter/fall of 2003.

Since November of last year, discussions have been held between Superior North EMS, Ontario Realty Crown Corporation (ORC) and the Ministry of Health with respect to having the garage rebuilt on the same property or having it rebuilt at a nearby OPP station which is still partially used by the OPP. An empty house on that property could serve as a new base.

On August 28th, ORC informed Superior North EMS that the OPP house was indeed available as surplus but that they would not build a garage as they did not have need for one. They also advised that a rental lease would be required for any building to be occupied. It was now impossible to relocate the station at this site before the cold weather set in.

On August 29th, a tour of the service area was conducted to assess the potential for a building which might be available and ready for service by October 1st 2002.

A visit of Shabaqua, Shebandowan, Kakabeka Falls, Conmee and points in between revealed that only one location could immediately house an ambulance vehicle and a paramedic crew on site with minor adjustments to the premises. Located 10 km west of Kakabeka Falls, the new Conmee Fire Department has space to accommodate the station immediately. The Conmee council has reviewed the need for an EMS station and supports the relocation to their Fire Station.

On September 4th, a meeting was held with the Shebandowan Local Services Board to advise them of the possible move or shutting down of the Shabaqua station. Discussions were held as to the possible solutions. Residents would prefer the station be closer to their location near Shebandowan Lake, but had no immediate space available to store an ambulance.

On September 9th, 2002, a meeting was held with the MOH to inquire as to the potential funding impact of moving the station from unorganized to organized territories. The other concern identified was the Province's position with respect to increased response times in Shebandowan and Shabaqua Corners as a trade off for decreased response times in other areas where there were significantly more calls. Both questions remain unanswered to this day.

COMMENTS

A call review analysis shows that since 1995, the Shabaqua station has 60 or less emergency service requests per year. The call volume in that area is the lowest in the division and possibly the lowest in the north region. During the first six months of this year, only six requests for emergency services were received and of those, five were closer to the Conmee Fire Station than Shabaqua. By relocating the station 30 kms east of Shabaqua Corners, it is anticipated this service would now handle between 200 and 300 requests for service per year. The majority of these calls will benefit from improved response times.

Improved services is expected in Conmee, Kaministiquia, Sunshine, parts of highways 102, 11-17, 588, 595, 590, O'Connor, Gillies, Pearson, Oliver, Paipoonge, Lybster and other areas. Increased response times will be noted near Shabaqua Corners and along Highway 11 towards Atikokan and at Shebandowan as well as about 10 kms of Hwy 11-17 east of Shabaqua Corners. The portion of Highway 17 towards Upsala will also see a deterioration for approximately 30 kilometres.

Preliminary discussions with the Municipality of Conmee indicates that a lease on a cost recovery basis could be established quickly for the use of the building by EMS in time for the October 1, 2002 move.

Currently one full time staff and two part time paramedics provide service at the existing station. Their on call response to the station is up to 20 minutes although they are often quicker. By moving the station to Conmee, additional paramedics have indicated they would like to work at that location thus reducing the shortage we have experienced over the past year. Since January of this year, the station had to be downstaffed on 69 occasions mainly due to staff not being available.

Because current paramedics do not live near the station, response times to the Shabaqua station after hours have ranged from nine minutes and 23 seconds to 30 minutes before the ambulance left the station. This happened 38% of the time. By relocating to Conmee it is expected that after hours response times from home to the station will be reduced.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that a suitable facility to continue to provide services in the area of Shabaqua Corners is not available. The only facility available immediately with minimal modifications is located at Conmee Fire Hall. By relocating the Shabaqua station at Conmee, Superior North EMS will be able to improve response times for over 200 emergency service requests per year. In 2001, about 40 calls would have seen an increase in response time ranging from five to sixteen additional minutes.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2002.277 (Emergency Medical Services Division), we recommend that the City enter into a Lease Agreement with the Township of Conmee on a cost recovery basis until December 2003;

AND THAT a report be submitted to City Council in November 2003 to evaluate the impact of the Conmee station on response times and quality of service in its response area;

AND THAT the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the lease agreement outlined in this Report, including any supplementary agreements, and renewal agreements related to the Lease Agreement in which no major changes to the current

Agreements are proposed;

AND THAT the necessary by-law be presented to City Council for ratification.

PREPARED BY: Jocelyn Bourgoin, Director

This report signed and verified by Robert Petrie, Acting City Manager, City of Thunder Bay on September 19, 2002