

Antigonish Volunteer Fire Departments and Possible Consolidation

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ANTIGONISH

Our Community

There are 9 volunteer Fire Departments located within the Town and County. They play an important role in fire protection and emergency services. They are also important community partners and organizers.



Guiding Principle(s)

1. [Take a regional approach to municipal services](#)
2. [Build vibrant individual communities](#)
4. [Continue fair taxation and user pay approaches](#)

The Town of Antigonish Volunteer Fire Department is funded directly by the Town and the County-based volunteer fire departments are funded through an Area Fire Levy. As the discussions continue about the potential for consolidation, there may be questions about what might change around fire service if a municipal merger should take place.

A history of strong municipal support for volunteers

The Municipal Government Act provides local governments with the ability to provide fire service directly or to support external volunteer organizations that do so. The Town has funded a volunteer fire department for many years, and these costs are included in the annual operating and capital budget.

In 2021-22 the Town operating budget for fire protection was about \$300,000. The Town supports the volunteer Chief and the Department, but the Chief is not an employee of the Town. Operating within annual budgets, the volunteers determine what the organization of fire services looks like on a year-to-year basis.

These critical emergency and community organizations are organized in response to the needs of their communities.



For the volunteer departments serving the County, there is also a history of long-term financial support to each volunteer organization through the mechanism of Area Fire Levies. The County paid approximately \$1,094,000 to County Fire Departments.



Departments

Antigonish County Volunteer Fire Department

North Shore Volunteer Fire Department

District 2 – Town Fire Department

Four Valley's Fire Department

Pomquet Emergency & Rescue Services

Tracadie Volunteer Fire Department

St. Andrews & District Volunteer Fire Department

Auld's Cove Volunteer Fire Department

Havre Boucher & District Volunteer Fire Dept.

Area rates are also provided for external departments in St. Mary's and Merigomish.

These critical emergency and community organizations are organized in response to the needs of their communities. The County collects and remits the Area Fire Levy to assist these groups, but it does not impose standards and procedures. The volunteer fire departments further support one another through the Strait Area Mutual Aid Association.

Will the relationship between municipal governments and volunteer fire services change?

Changes to funding and the operation of volunteer fire departments is not a part of any discussions on consolidation. The Town and County will only discuss changes to volunteer fire services during this process if a request is made by the fire departments.



Summary: Volunteer Fire Service is important to all communities in both the Town and County. Whether operated directly in the Town or funded by Area Fire Rates in the County, these volunteer organizations understand their community needs and respond accordingly. They do not operate in isolation and have lots of experience through in their communities and support one another through mutual aid. It is important for municipal funding of volunteer fire service to be continued in the same manner. There is no reason to change this system because of a possible municipal consolidation.