

West Hants Regional Fire Service

Regional Fire Service Modernization and Organizational Readiness Update

Committee of the Whole

Date: September 28, 2026
Department: West Hants Regional Fire Service
Subject: Work Plan and Readiness Update
Prepared by: Director of Fire Services

Purpose

To provide Committee of the Whole with a high-level update on the work underway to assess fire service readiness, strengthen regional coordination and establish the foundation for a more integrated West Hants Regional Fire Service.

Background

The current phase of the work plan is focused on gathering information, building working relationships and understanding existing operational practices, resources and service requirements across the six stations. This work will support future recommendations related to regional service delivery, training, governance, capital planning and emergency response coordination.

Work Completed / Underway

- Information is being gathered from all six stations on operations, staffing, training, apparatus, equipment, response activity and existing practices. This will establish a regional readiness picture and support a full Regional Fire Service Assessment and Capital Asset Management Strategy.
- All Fire Chiefs have been given a deadline of October 5th to submit all required information requested. Once obtained a Regional Fire Services assessment will commence and a review of all assets to form a regional Capital Asset Management Strategy
- Discussions with the Fire Chiefs are underway to identify common priorities, improve communication and move toward consistent regional operating practices, including Standard Operational Guidelines, training, procurement and equipment.
- Meetings have been held with provincial representatives regarding new and emerging legislation, firefighter training requirements, provincial training opportunities and available grant programs.
- Meetings have been held with neighbouring fire service coordinators and Fire Chiefs to discuss shared resources, response capabilities and opportunities to strengthen mutual aid. Existing mutual aid agreements are also being reviewed.
- Work has started with the Fire Chiefs to define a regional training program, including common training expectations, joint exercises, officer development and opportunities to better use instructors, facilities and equipment across the region.
- On September 26 and 27, an Incident Command workshop was facilitated by the Director of Fire Services for all officers from across the Regional Municipality. The workshop focused on incident command, size-up, development of an initial Incident Action Plan and the 360-degree assessment. Officers from different stations trained together, discussed tactical decision-making and shared operational experience. This is an example of the regionalized training model being advanced:

bringing members from across the service together to learn from one another, develop common practices and strengthen interoperability.

- Meetings with Planning and Works have identified opportunities for greater interoperability, including emergency planning, infrastructure incidents, water supply, road access, severe weather response and shared municipal resources.

Key Considerations

The early review continues to reinforce the need for stronger regional coordination, consistent training and operating expectations, reliable information on available resources and closer integration with municipal and neighbouring emergency partners. Capital and asset planning, recruitment and retention, officer development, governance and performance reporting will also form part of the broader work plan.

Financial Implications

No new financial commitment is requested through this report. Information being gathered will inform future operating, capital, grant and asset replacement recommendations brought forward for Council consideration through the appropriate budget and approval processes.

Risk and Mitigation

Key risks include inconsistent operating practices, varying training levels, differences in resource availability and aging equipment across the service. These risks are being addressed through the readiness review, regional planning, joint training, mutual aid review and the development of consistent service expectations.

Next Steps

Continue engagement with the Fire Chiefs and provincial and regional partners; complete the readiness and resource review; advance the regional training framework; review mutual aid arrangements; identify priority operational and capital requirements; and bring significant policy, financial or governance recommendations forward through the appropriate municipal process.