

November 2017

A new Fire Hall for the next 50 years

Our community is growing! The most recent Canada Census indicated our population to be 5351. As we continue to grow and develop, we need to plan strategically for our infrastructure. And our infrastructure includes more than pipes and roads; it also includes municipal buildings.

A key piece of our municipal infrastructure is our Fire Hall. Did you know that this building, located on 10th Avenue North, is a converted grocery store that was built in the 1950's? Our Fire Department moved into that building in 1982. Many years later we now serve a population base that extends beyond our municipal borders; providing fire protection to approximately 8000 people. Our Department has grown, our service provision has grown and now we are faced with the need for a new Fire Hall.

So why do we need a new Fire Hall, you may ask...

1. The health and safety of our fire fighters is compromised as a result of deficiencies in the existing fire hall; inadequate ventilation and a lack of space for an effective decontamination process.
2. Our community needs a fire hall to be up and running in the event of a natural disaster (think extreme winds, snow loads, seismic activity or even wildfire).
3. The converted building and site are simply too small for the present day services our Department provides.
4. The site size is simply too small to accommodate all the renovations that would be required to fix all the deficiencies.
5. And finally, if renovations were to be undertaken they would likely render the fire hall inoperable for a significant period of time.

There's a lot of talk throughout the community that our taxes are simply too high to take on more borrowing. And I understand that no one likes to pay more tax. But can our community afford to be without an adequate Fire Hall and associated site? Can we really continue to ask our volunteers to work and train in a building that affects their health and safety? Would you be willing to serve in this kind of capacity under these conditions? In this case, it is clear that there is more than the financial bottom line to consider.

While knowing the complexity of the Fire Hall discussion, we realize the cost is still a key issue that this community has to wrestle with. So what are we asking the community to consider borrowing? The answer is a maximum amount of \$6.1 million dollars and we know that's a lot of money. But there are three things we should consider when contemplating this request to approve a maximum amount for borrowing:

- The maximum project cost for a new Fire Hall only building would be \$5.3 million dollars. However we're currently in negotiations with the Province of BC to see if they want to participate in the project by including space for the BC Ambulance Service. They would fund their own debt servicing for an estimated value of \$800,000.
- We may be able to reduce the actual cost of the project through grants, donations, or sale or lease of the existing building. The challenge is that we can only pursue these kinds of solutions after our community has approved the maximum amount for borrowing.
- On a worst case scenario, if we needed to borrow the entire \$5.3 million for the Fire Hall portion of the project, how would this impact municipal taxes? The answer is that for less than the price of a cup of coffee a day, per household, we could accommodate the required taxation increase.

A \$200,000 home would see an increase (over 2017 taxation) of
\$74.35 annually or approximately \$0.20 per day

A \$300,000 home would see an increase (over 2017 taxation) of
\$111.52 annually or approximately \$0.31 per day

A \$400,000 home would see an increase (over 2017 taxation) of
\$148.69 annually or approximately \$0.41 per day

I would encourage you to visit our website and check out the new "Get the Facts" link to make sure you have factual information on the proposed Fire Hall project. You can also pick up a paper copy of these Questions & Answers at Town Hall.

Whether you vote YES or NO at the upcoming referendum, cast your vote based on facts!

Don't hesitate to contact me by:

Visiting me at my office in Town Hall

Email me at ron.toyota@creston.ca , or

Calling me at (250) 428-2214 (extension 227).