

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



We have recently heard and read a lot about fire safety in Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot. Providing optimal coverage in our area is a priority for Municipal Council. Although the issue is complex, we have a responsibility to protect the safety of all residents and their property. Our decisions, based on the various options available to us, must reflect the facts, not opinions. Please read this special edition of What's New carefully to learn about your fire department's status, history and current situation arising from past decisions.

The construction of a fire station in Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot and the possible creation of a new fire department are major issues that will have important consequences. The information in this document will help you understand recent decisions by Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot's Municipal Council to ensure optimal fire safety coverage across our territory.

HOT TOPIC 1 - FIRE SAFETY AGREEMENT

Under the Fire Safety Agreement, the Municipality of L'Île-Perrot provides the fire protection services to Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot, which includes organizing, operating and administering the service. Capital expenditures as well as operating and administrative costs are prorated according to the population size of the two cities. Each year, the Municipality of Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot pays approximately 50% of the cost, or roughly \$850,000.

On signing the renewal agreement in 2006, the municipalities of L'Île-Perrot and Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot agreed on the need to build a new station in Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot territory. This requirement was included in the implementation plan for the Vaudreuil-Soulanges RCM Fire Safety Cover Plan. Following the recommendations of the fire safety director, the Municipality of Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot purchased land at the intersection of Don-Quichotte and Saint-Joseph boulevards in July 2009 to build a fire station that could properly serve the NDIP territory. In November 2009, the newly elected Council therefore asked the Municipality of L'Île-Perrot to create a fire authority in order to start construction of the new fire station.

L'Île-Perrot Municipal Council turned down the request. In September 2014, the fire director submitted a response time report to the inter-municipal committee, which unequivocally confirmed the need to build a fire station in Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot to protect the safety of Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot residents. In September 2016, elected officials from both cities reached a consensus on a new agreement scheduled to expire in the fall of 2021. This agreement includes improvements to the information that NDIP receives from the fire department, particularly concerning equipment acquisitions. The new station intended to provide maximum coverage is still awaiting approval by L'Île-Perrot municipal council.

The Municipality of Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot continues to work with the Municipality of L'Île-Perrot to offer residents of both cities the best option. Unless a new agreement is in place when the current agreement expires, NDIP's withdrawal will have major financial repercussions. Under the current agreement, the Municipality of L'Île-Perrot will have to pay NDIP financial compensation in an amount equal to its share of the market value of the fire department's moveable property (vehicles, equipment and material).

HOT TOPIC 2 - CURRENT COVERAGE OF NOTRE-DAME TERRITORY

In a report tabled in April 2019, an independent expert commissioned by the City—Gordon Routley, an engineer specializing in fire management and risk cover plan development—reconfirmed the need for a fire station to provide optimal service to Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot. After a thorough review of response time data in recent years, he confirmed that the location of the existing fire station near L'Île-Perrot city hall is too far from the rest of Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot territory and is situated in a high-traffic area. In recent years, average response times (the time it takes to mobilize firefighters on call outside the station plus travel time) have gradually increased, particularly due to urban sprawl. In some cases, the waiting time was as much as 24 minutes. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the International Standards Organization and the RCM Risk Cover Plan, response time should not exceed 8 minutes.

NEXT STEPS FOR NDIP

The same expert was awarded a second contract to plan our territory's needs. This contract includes two components. The first involves determining construction requirements, i.e., how many doors does the fire station require? What items are essential to such a facility? A kitchen, dormitories, offices, a decontamination room, etc.? We will also use this contract to examine the implementation of traffic management and noise control measures during an alarm. The second component concerns establishing a fire department: in addition to appointing a director, the fire department also needs staff and firefighters.

We also analyzed the benefits of having staff posted onsite at the existing station. For now, this option is not among our municipality's priorities considering the condition of the existing fire station, its lack of space and its cramped, congested location. The Municipality of Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot will determine the most appropriate shift structure once the new station is built in the right location, and once firefighters have a suitable workplace. And what about achieving better fire department cohesion? We unanimously agree on the importance of a fire department to protect residents' lives and property. That said, the department must respond adequately to calls in an acceptable amount of time. It is also essential that our facilities and the quality of the equipment that our firefighters use meet workspace and workplace safety standards.

Each fire station in a municipality's area must have equipment that can adequately serve the population. Each fire department must have its own captain, staff and part-time firefighters. What if we all put our heads together under the NDIP's current service optimization strategy to find a way for the fire departments to collaborate? What if strategically situated fire stations, in Pincourt, NDIP or Terrasse-Vaudreuil, could adequately respond to calls from across the area? What if resource sharing was possible and beneficial to the municipalities served? What if we decided to guarantee resident safety above all else? The fire department of a given area is more than firefighters saving lives; it is an investment. As elected officials, our role is to ensure that we maximize this investment.

What's new @NDIP

July 2019
Fire Safety Edition



FIRE SAFETY SERVICES - AT A GLANCE

Under the Fire Safety Agreement, the Municipality of L'Île-Perrot provides fire protection services to Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot, which includes organizing, operating and administering the fire department. An inter-municipal committee consisting of three members from each Municipal Council is responsible for examining all agreement-related issues, for monitoring compliance by the municipalities with their commitments, and for making any recommendations deemed appropriate. The L'Île-Perrot and NDIP fire department consists of 55 primarily part-time employees. Except for 12 nights in winter, the fire station has no onsite employees. Its staff consists of three managers (one director at 8 hrs/wk, one assistant director at 40 hrs/wk and one operations manager at 8 hrs/wk), a first responder coordinator (40 hrs/wk), a prevention officer (40 hrs/wk), three teams of 14 on-call firefighters based outside the station (a captain, lieutenant, acting lieutenant and 11 firefighters) and eight first responders. The emergency call responses, management and training, as well as all fire prevention and safety activities, are based at the station on Perrot Boulevard near the L'Île-Perrot city hall. The station's facilities include three pumper trucks, an aerial ladder, two water craft, a rescue unit, four vans, a 4-wheel vehicle (in summer) and a track vehicle (in winter) as well as an enclosed trailer. At present, the fire department rents garage space to store its third pumper truck due to space constraints at the current station.

The fire department responds to an average of 900 emergency calls annually: 500 involving first responders and 400 concerning fire safety. Of the 400 fire-safety related calls, an average of 150 originate in the NDIP area. Considering the off-site staffing situation, the fire department's response time includes the time it takes to mobilize the firefighters, i.e., the time between receiving the emergency call and the firefighters' arrival at the fire station, plus the time it takes them to travel from the fire station to the site of the emergency. According to various standard-setting organizations, a response time of about 8 minutes fosters an effective response.

QUESTIONS / ANSWERS

Here a few constructive questions and comments that we recently received:

Q: WOULD IT BE LESS EXPENSIVE IF WE HAD OUR OWN SERVICE?

A: We don't want to create our own service at all costs. We still want to put collaboration first and, ideally, consolidate our firefighting services. We do not anticipate short-term economies of scale given the amount of acquisitions required in the coming years. Fire safety amounts to a significant cost in our respective budgets. Sharing resources, expertise and equipment is a highly attractive means of lowering acquisition and operating costs.

Q: DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN PROPERLY COVER THE MUNICIPALITY OF L'ÎLE-PERROT WITH THE FIRE STATION IN NDIP?

A: As the best strategy, we continue to recommend collaboration among the three fire stations (Pincourt, Terrasse-Vaudreuil and NDIP) properly situated in the territory. The existing fire station's location prevents optimal coverage. Our more remote areas, such as Pointe-du-Moulin, are always problematic. According to the expert, the suggested location of the new fire station and the consolidation of services would ensure optimal coverage of L'Île-Perrot. In fact, the Île-Perrot fire department director has recommended construction of the Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot fire department for several years. We assume that his recommendations also took into account the quality of service provided to residents the municipality of L'Île-Perrot.

Q: DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT A FIRE DEPARTMENT CONSOLIDATION IS POSSIBLE?

A: The Régie de l'eau de l'Île Perrot water authority is a concrete example of collaboration and resource sharing. The municipalities of Pincourt, Terrasse-Vaudreuil and NDIP have worked together for several years, and the Régie offers high-quality water management services. Elected members of Council work together smoothly and effectively in the same spirit of public service.

Q: WHAT IS THE TIMEFRAME FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW FIRE STATION?

A: The Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot Council wants the station to enter operation by 2021. We will receive the needs study by the summer's end, begin drafting the plans and specifications and then issue a call for tenders for construction of the fire station and acquisition of the required equipment. We therefore have time to maximize collaboration before awarding contracts.

Q: WHY ARE YOU SUGGESTING THREE FIRE STATIONS INSTEAD OF ONE?

A: The territory covered is very large, with NDIP occupying 70% of the island. According to the expert, the Pincourt and Terrasse-Vaudreuil fire stations, in addition to the new fire station in the NDIP area, would ensure an adequate response to emergency calls across the territory. Since the municipality of Terrasse-Vaudreuil is landlocked, a fire station in this area is vital. The Pincourt fire station, currently undergoing work, will help ensure optimal coverage with its modern, effective facilities.

Q: WHY IS NDIP SO DETERMINED TO HAVE A FIRE STATION IN ITS AREA?

A: More than anything, NDIP wants to keep its population safe. Whether the ideal fire station is located in one or other of the municipalities, NDIP will do what is best for residents. We are pursuing a long-term vision for the fire department, convinced that collaboration among the fire stations is essential to the safety of all residents.

Q: AND WHY NOT SIMPLY AMALGAMATE?

A: As far as fire safety goes, we consider it completely irrelevant to confuse optimal resident security with the idea of turning an island into one city. The issues are very different, and we will not minimize the urgent importance of public safety by shifting the discussion to amalgamation. The Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot Council is very clear on its position against amalgamation, and in matters of resident safety, time matters.