

### Message from the Fire Chief

2022 has been a year of change for your Fire Department, in January I replaced Don Kruger as your new Fire Chief and at the end of May we took delivery of 2 (new to us) fire trucks from the City of Ottawa. These 2 vehicles have now come online having recently passed their annual pump test, staff have been trained on the vehicles and they have been equipped for service. They will provide a flexible approach to our response options as each hall will now be equipped with a full size pump truck, mini pumper (for the initial attack) and a tanker. In addition, Madawaska has a 4x4 vehicle allowing us a certain off-road capability for brush fire fighting. The 2 decommissioned fire trucks will be remaining within our township as we have passed them onto Murray Bros and McRae Mills. I am grateful for the support I have received from both council and McRae Mills who helped ensure that the Whitney vehicle was swiftly brought into service.



Madawaska pumper 537



Whitney mini pumper 506

South Algonquin Fire Department is a volunteer fire department operating out of 2 fire halls, Whitney, and Madawaska. We currently have 25 volunteers and myself, their part time chief. We are always looking for volunteers to join us, both halls currently have vacancies for new fire fighters. Training currently takes place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at Madawaska and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday at Whitney, more information can be obtained from the township office or by calling me directly. Although we are a volunteer service staff do receive a financial remuneration from the township and life insurance coverage is also provided.

We are classed as an exterior fire suppression and auto extrication department. What does that really mean to you? Simply put we fight fires from the outside and are equipped to cut open vehicles to removed persons trapped inside. Our firefighters are First Aid, CPR and AED trained, we also provide fire prevention advice and fire safety education to members of our community.

The level of Fire Protection Services within the Township of South Algonquin will be dependant on the following:

- A) Full level of suppression to those residing on year-round roads maintained to municipal standards
- B) Seasonal level of suppression for those residing on roads not maintained in winter
- C) No suppression to those with no road access
- D) All areas will receive the same level of Fire Prevention Programs
- E) Distance from Fire Halls will determine response times.

I felt it important in this article to quote from the by-law to ensue that there is no misunderstanding about what we will do and where we will go and that your expectations of us are realistic.

On the subject of road access here is where I need your help. Our vehicles are bigger than your vehicles, we require a 12' x 12' clear cut opening. Do you have overhanging trees that look lovely but will restrict our access? If you do, please consider trimming them and then maintain that aperture. Remember, we can only help you if we can get there.

Paragraph C means, I am sorry to say, we will not attend water access only properties simply because we are not equipped or trained to provide this service.

So now we're really getting down to the purpose of this article, Fire Prevention, what can you do to help yourselves? No one wants to suffer a loss due to fire but let's be real, property can be replaced, a human life cannot. The number one cause of house fires in Ontario is cooking, especially unattended cooking, be it in the kitchen or at the BBQ. If you allow smoking at your home / cottage, establish a safe smoking area with a sand or better still, water filled can for butts. Has your chimney been cleaned and inspected recently? Animals build nests inside them, which can restrict the air flow, this in turn can cause a build up of CO inside your property.

There is no doubt in my mind WORKING SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES. Please ensure that yours has a fresh battery every year. Tip, change the battery when you put back your clocks and write the month & year using a sharpie on the battery to remind yourself how old the battery is. Working smoke alarms are required by law on every level of your home and outside all sleeping areas. Test them monthly and remember smoke alarms do not last forever, replace them every 10 years.

In Ontario, you must have a working CO alarm adjacent to each sleeping area of the home if you have a fuel burning appliance, a fire place or an attached garage. As with smoke alarms, test regularly, change the batteries yearly and replace every 10 years.

Fire extinguishers in your home are not a legal requirement, but in my opinion they should be. They are relatively inexpensive compared to the value of your home or cottage. You all know how long it takes to drive from Whitney or Madawaska to your home – that's our response time ONCE WE ARRIVE AT THE FIRE HALL! All fires usually start small, grow and spread, timely intervention with a fire extinguisher may well stop your day going from bad too worse. A bare minimum is one but really is that going to be enough? Like everything else in life, its never going to be in the right place when you need it. Fire extinguishers placed near to sources of a fire such as kitchen, fireplace or garage, to assist you to get out in an emergency by your bedroom door or front door to grab as you enter your building are all viable suggestions. Do you know how your fire extinguisher works? The working principle of all fire extinguishers is exactly the same, but I'd like to remind you of the basic rules:

P – PULL... the pin. This will also break the tamper seal

A – AIM... low, pointing the extinguisher nozzle (or its horn or hose) at the base of the fire

S – SQUEEZE.... the handle to release the extinguishing agent

S- SWEEP.... from side to side at the base of the fire until it appears to be out.

When fighting a fire with an extinguisher, always keep an escape route behind you. If you have never used a fire extinguisher, please be aware they can be noisy and they never last as long as you would like to think they will. Prepare a plan on how to escape your property in the event of a fire and remember its nice to have friends stay but EVERY sleeping area requires 2 means of exit on 2 different walls.

Please ensure that you have obtained a free burn permit, details and further advice regarding safely burning outside are available on the township website. And finally, please heed the directions of the burn indicator boards placed strategically throughout the township. Currently, at the time of writing, we are in a 'night time burning only' period, this means no open fires between 9 am – 6 pm.

Lastly, how to contact us? In an emergency, please call 911 and remember our township name is **South Algonquin**. It is possible that when using a cell phone, you may not be connected directly to our dispatch centre, so remember to give our township name, this may save valuable time in getting the call routed too us.

I am available to discuss any residents concerns with regard to our fire protection services and my contact details are published on the township's website and newsletter.

Finally may I wish you all a wonderful fall and sincerely hope that we only meet socially.

Ian Collins

Fire Chief