

Happy Valley-Goose Bay needs new fire hall

Town seeking funding in provincial budget

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HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, N.L. — With the provincial budget to be presented in the next few months, towns around the province are getting in their budget wish lists. For Happy Valley-Goose Bay, their list includes funding to go towards a new fire hall.

Fire Chief Brad Butler said the volunteer fire department has outgrown the current building and they need more room. Butler said when he came in as chief in 2016 it was a priority he had identified.

The current fire hall in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, built in the 1980s, doesn't have enough room to expand.

“When that building was built back in the 1980’s it was built for two smaller style fire trucks and two ambulances,” he said. “At the time it fit what the community needed, but for future expansion what we have is nowhere near where it needs to be.”

Butler said it can barely contain the equipment they have now and the plan is to upgrade to an aerial style ladder truck in the next few years, which would not fit in the current building. Additionally, they would like to acquire a command vehicle to transport the gear of the volunteer firefighters, which right now they have to transport in their personal vehicles.

“Legislation-wise the gear should be in the fire hall or in this mobile truck that would be brought to the scenes,” he said. “The way the building sits right now, we can’t offer either of those. With the growing community we have and for future expansion, you need bigger fire trucks.”

In terms of location, the current space the fire department occupies on Hamilton River Road wouldn’t be able to accommodate a bigger building. Butler said his hope would be to build a new fire hall on Kelland Drive.

“We would need a four to six-bay, drive-through facility and Kelland is the best place for that,” he said. “Having the fire hall there, near the planned bigger buildings would be ideal.”

Butler said with the new Labrador Wellness Centre in the works, as well as two planned schools for Kelland Drive, it brought the concerns to the forefront, since a bigger truck would be needed to service those facilities.

“You could put a ladder up but it’s a safety issue there,” he said. “The new aerial truck would address that.”

Training

Another limitation of the current fire hall is it doesn’t have any space for training.

“Right now if we have to do training we have to go to the regional training centre,” Butler said. “They hold a week-long training (session) in either

Clarenville or Grand Falls-Windsor and the dollar cost per person is high. To send all my volunteers, the taxpayers wouldn't be able to pay for it."

Butler hopes a new fire hall would potentially work as a regional fire training centre for Labrador, since firefighters from the north and south coast could go there to train, saving all the municipalities involved money.

"If we could put that in the new building there could be other funding available as well to maybe lower the cost," he said.

Butler said he's not sure what the price tag for a new building would be but a similar fire hall built in Gander cost about \$5 million. Right now they're just looking for approval for the design phase from the province in this budget and hoping to see ground broke on a new fire hall in 2021.