

Sunshine Coast Regional District Fire Department Compensation Review

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1. Executive Summary

The Sunshine Coast Regional District (the “SCRD”) engaged Tim Pley & Associates Ltd. (“TPA” or the “Consultant”) to undertake a review of firefighter compensation and submit a report that includes recommendations.

The SCRD operates four fire departments, each distinctly different from the others in terms of culture, the nature of the community served, the number and type of calls for service, and in some cases, service levels. The SCRD has received requests that a paid on call (“POC”) model be developed to compensate firefighters for their time. Currently, the SCRD compensates firefighters for attending training, but not for response to emergency incidents. In some cases, the SCRD provides an annual stipend to officers.

It should be recognized that volunteer and paid-on-call fire departments are one of the most cost effective services in which local governments can invest. For residents, the departments provide time-impacted, life-critical services; at the same time, as each of the SCRD departments has a solid rating from the Fire Underwriters,¹ property owners and businesses could be realizing a net savings on their insurance costs relative to fire protection service costs.

The SCRD is in receipt of a third party report recommending that the current compensation practices for volunteer firefighters be reviewed, and another report providing a comparison of current SCRD firefighter compensation rates and benefits relative to other jurisdictions. The SCRD has developed a Fire Fighter Compensation Advisory Planning (“FFCAP”) working group that includes chief officers and firefighter representatives.

The rural fire service in BC and across North America is experiencing an unprecedented period of change, including the transition of formerly volunteer firefighter groups to POC. While the impact of transitioning to a POC model is felt locally, the SCRD, its constituents, and its firefighters should bear in mind that this is not strictly a local issue, and the pressures and stressors that they are experiencing are also being felt in other jurisdictions across the continent.

This report includes the Consultant’s findings based on engagement sessions with each of the four fire department groups, the FFCAP working group, and SCRD staff, as well as a review of SCRD documents and third-party reports. Recommendations in this report are intended to support the SCRD transitioning to a POC model in a way that provides for the best possible short- and long-term outcomes, including the establishment of new processes for engagement of the SCRD’s firefighters. The recommended engagement processes are intended to enable healthy dialogue on the topic of compensation as well as other matters that are likely to arise as the rural fire service continues to adapt to change.

¹ Dave Mitchell & Associates Ltd., *Sunshine Coast Regional District: Fire Services Strategic Plan 2018* (December 2018), Table 7 at p. 84.

2. Scope of Work and Methodology

2.1 Scope of Work

The SCRD sought third-party assistance in supporting its working group on the topic of reviewing firefighter compensation options, following up on firefighter compensation benchmarking work completed in 2023 and more recent committee work. Project work is intended to inform a compensation action plan project currently underway internally at the SCRD.

While the scope of work intentionally provided for fluidity in terms of following up on inputs from interest holder engagement sessions, it included:

1. reviewing relevant background documentation including a 2018 service review (Strategic Plan report) and 2023 compensation benchmarking report;
2. engaging with the project working group and firefighters in four SCRD volunteer fire departments, to understand:
 - a. current compensation pressure points/concerns; and
 - b. opportunities for change in the short, medium and long terms that align culturally with the fire departments and the SCRD;
3. conducting a high-level review and providing comment on other 'total compensation' factors such as benefits, support to Associations, wage replacement, etc.;
4. preparing recommendations in the form of a written report for changes to the SCRD's current approach to firefighter compensation. Recommendations should consider short-, medium- and long-term needs/opportunities and should promote resilience in the face of a dynamic industry/sector; and
5. presenting a final report to the SCRD Board of Directors (in-person or virtually).

It was intended that draft recommendations be delivered prior to the SCRD's annual budget process being initiated in mid-October.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology undertaken as part of this project included:

1. reviewing of current sector trends;
2. reviewing relevant documentation including:
 - a. 2018 Fire Services Strategic Plan report;
 - b. 2023 Regional District Fire Service Compensation Review and Benchmarking report;

- c. 2023 SCRD Fire Department Compensation Option Development report (an internal summary of compensation options);
 - d. SCRD Firefighter Compensation Action Plan;
 - e. SCRD Firefighter Compensation Action Plan Project Team (FFCAP Project Team) meeting agendas and minutes; and
 - f. communication updates for firefighters on the working group progress;
3. engaging with and taking input from as many firefighters as possible in group settings and individually if necessary;
 4. engaging with the FFCAP Project Team;
 5. providing a draft report for consideration; and
 6. providing and presenting a final report including recommendations for action.

3. Sector History and Current Sector Trends

The local government structure fire protection sector, known for its adherence to tradition, is experiencing an unprecedented period of change. Change drivers include:

- societal and demographic changes that result in increased calls for service, aging out of the Baby Boomer generation firefighters, and a general decline in volunteerism;
- cultural changes that result in current and future volunteer and POC firefighters requiring a clearer value proposition related to their involvement in volunteer fire departments. This often manifests in the expressed need that firefighters' time be valued, including in terms of compensation, that they be provided with competent leaders, receive quality training, and that they have a voice in the making of decisions that affect them;
- legislative and regulatory changes that result in increased training, maintenance and administrative workloads; and
- fire departments being brought into the local government organizations, where historically a hands-off approach was more common.²

If a long-term view is applied to fire services, where rural fire departments once succeeded using firefighters engaged on a volunteer basis, and local governments might have funded, but were not necessarily involved in the managing of those departments, today firefighters are more likely to be POC as opposed to volunteers. Local government involvement in the management of rural fire departments has increased, as evidenced by the setting of fire department service levels, and the hiring of chief officers as local government employees. In the past fire department chief officers were more commonly elected by department members.

The province-wide trend of a decline in the number of firefighters who are purely volunteers, and a considerable shift toward the POC compensation model under various forms appears to be a permanent shift in rural fire service.

3.1 Chief Officers

One change noted above, the selection of chief officers (fire chiefs, deputy fire chiefs, and assistant fire chiefs) transitioning from member-elected to local government, merit-based hiring, bears examination, as it reflects the transition in the rural fire service, and fundamentally changes the way in which affected departments and local governments will need to conduct business.

In the past, volunteer chief officers were selected by the firefighters, and were accountable to the membership. While local governments may have formally appointed the chief officers who were selected by the members, all parties generally understood that chief officers represented department members first and foremost. Under that model, local governments correctly deferred to chief officers as the social and operational leaders of fire department membership groups.

² Local government hands off approach to managing volunteer and POC fire departments is sometimes referred to as the "fund and forget model."

When there was a need to consult or communicate with firefighters, the chiefs were the natural and effective conduit.

Since the hiring of career fire chiefs in the SCRD in recent years, the role of those chiefs, and their ability to speak for firefighters have changed. Where once the role of chief officers in volunteer departments involved being both the operational leader and the representative of the members, today it includes being the operational leader and the *representative of the employer* in the workplace (fire hall). Importantly for the discussion on firefighter compensation, chief officers can no longer be considered by the SCRD as the only or principal advocates for their firefighters, nor should they be used to select the advocates. Chief officers, as per their employment agreements, are now management employees of the SCRD.

With the role of chief officers changed, or perhaps redefined, the SCRD should create an alternate, effective pathway through which to engage its firefighters on non-operational matters such as compensation. A preferred scenario would be that firefighter groups elect their representatives who are tasked with interacting with the SCRD on matters related to compensation and other non-operational issues. The SCRD's fire departments are, and should operate more like, workplaces. The SCRD should, in essence, seek to mirror within its fire departments, systems that are effective in the SCRD's unionized work groups, to ensure functional two-way conversations between the SCRD and its firefighters. This will help with the compensation discussion and will also enable the SCRD and its firefighters to communicate about various other changes that will affect the fire departments as the sector continues to evolve in response to external change drivers.

Some of the difficulty that the SCRD and its fire departments have experienced recently on the compensation discussion, are related to the absence of effective processes for interaction between the SCRD and its firefighters. Within this void, individuals will naturally seek out direct and indirect communication channels with decision-makers. This can take the form of direct engagement between firefighters and individual Board members, airing out of grievances on social media platforms, or utilization of the myriad pathways that exist in rural communities where people are connected in multiple ways.

Development of effective organizational committee structures and communication channels should be considered in parallel with the matter of firefighter compensation. They are connected.

3.2 Unionization in the POC Firefighter Sector

In 2023, the sector trend of volunteer fire departments transitioning to the POC model experienced a significant change. POC firefighters employed by the Municipality of North Cowichan were organized by CUPE 358, resulting in the first collective agreement in BC with a union representing only POC firefighters. That collective agreement includes a wage schedule for POC firefighters (see Appendix A). The North Cowichan wage rate matrix is similar in format to career firefighter salary matrixes common in IAFF collective agreements in BC.

Soon after the public announcement of the North Cowichan collective agreement, the neighbouring City of Duncan adopted by way of Council resolution a similar wage matrix, and the same hourly wage rates as North Cowichan (see Appendix B). Similar matrices are being utilized and considered in other jurisdictions in BC, indicating that the North Cowichan/Duncan POC firefighter hourly wage matrix may represent an emerging standard POC compensation model in BC.

The SCRD is not obligated to adopt any firefighter compensation model, nor is it obligated to pay the same levels of compensation as other local governments. However, the SCRD is encouraged to take into consideration recent compensation changes in the POC firefighter sector, understand that SCRD's firefighters are aware of these trends, and consider adopting a compensation model that will remain relevant and effective in the future.

4. What We Heard

The firefighters with whom the Consultants engaged expressed a range of feelings and opinions on the matters of compensation and the process through which the SCR D has been exploring compensation alternatives. Some specific matters raised are summarized and addressed below. In general, members of the four SCR D fire departments were found to be community-focussed, invested in their department's team, operating in effective team units, and unfamiliar with local government processes and timelines.

While the firefighter groups demonstrated non-familiarity with local government processes³ they did project in group sessions that the matter of compensation has been heavily discussed, and groups and individuals have formed some opinions on the matter.

The Consultant observed from the FFCAP Project working group, a higher level of understanding of the compensation issue, complexity and constraints. Members of the FFCAP Project working group were observed to represent their constituent groups well, and to be collaborating effectively to find solutions that work for the SCR D and all firefighter groups.

4.1 Trust and Transparency

There are often varying levels of trust and understanding between firefighters and local governments. Trust and understanding appear to be most difficult to develop and foster at the regional district level of local government, where the local government can be responsible for service provision in multiple communities, and each firefighter group represents only one of those communities.

SCR D firefighters expressed varying levels of trust in the SCR D and its motives for undertaking a compensation review. Some expressed concerns that the SCR D was using the compensation discussion to take greater control of the fire departments. Concern was expressed about transparency regarding the SCR D's actions and motives related to the compensation review. Firefighters perceived mixed messages from the SCR D about the role that firefighters were expected to play in developing a new compensation model and in communicating within their communities about increases in firefighter compensation. Some firefighters thought that the SCR D had tasked the firefighters with deciding their preferred compensation model, and with communicating with the public on the matter of compensation.

The inputs noted above likely reflect the absence of regular interaction through effective channels between the parties involved.

³ Firefighters and firefighter groups commonly lack a full understanding of local government processes, how local governments make decisions, and what motivates those decisions. Likewise, local government staff are commonly unaware of this, and assume that the firefighters are better-versed in local government processes than actually is the case; local government staff also often do not fully understand or appreciate volunteer firefighter culture and issues. This mutual absence of understanding can result in perceptions and assumptions that undermine trust.

4.2 Communications

The SCRD has been strategically utilizing its communications resources to promote public awareness of the value of firefighters. These efforts were reported as being successful in terms of increasing public awareness of fire services and the benefit that volunteers provide to the communities. Without such efforts, constituents might not consider how much they value fire protection services or whether firefighters providing that service are adequately compensated.

As noted above, feedback was received indicating that some firefighters perceived that the SCRD was expecting the firefighters to take some ownership of the external communication process. The SCRD should be aware of this perception held by some firefighters, avoid actions or statements that could perpetuate that impression, and utilize the FFCAP Project working group to keep firefighters informed.

4.3 Potential Impact of POC Model on Volunteerism and Department Culture

While a number of firefighters expressed concerns that the current compensation structure and rates do not cover their input costs let alone adequately compensate them for time away from work and family, a significant number of firefighters, sometimes the same ones, expressed that they did not want compensation changes to negatively affect camaraderie within their department or detract from their ability to volunteer their time for non-operational/unpaid tasks.

Firefighters generally want to be compensated for attending training, responding to calls, and doing other work under the direction of the fire chiefs, while not wanting to lose any of the positive aspects about the departments that they currently enjoy.

4.4 Fairness and Respect

The issues of fairness and respect were central within the feedback from firefighters.

Firefighters want to feel respected by the SCRD. Some expressed that the current rates of compensation, remaining unchanged for many years, reflect an absence of respect.

The matter of fairness was also central to discussions. Firefighters acknowledged that some service areas have smaller tax bases than others, affecting the budget capacity to pay the same wages as in other SCRD service areas. Also, some departments provide higher levels of service than others and respond to greater numbers of calls for service. Any compensation model adopted by SCRD should reflect fairness, and result in firefighters feeling respected.

The matter of fairness arose as a concern when discussing the potential for different wage rates in different departments, based on varying levels of service and ability to pay. Conversely, if the same hourly rates of compensation were to be applied across the four SCRD fire departments, how would that provide fairness given that those new rates might reflect considerable increases over current rates in some departments and smaller increases (maybe even decreases) in one

or more department? There was consensus that a change in compensation practices should not result in any firefighters receiving lower compensation than under the current model or having to work more to earn the same compensation.

4.5 Potential to Maintain Unique Practices Within a Common Compensation Model

Firefighters were understandably focused on their own departments more than on ensuring consistency across the SCRD. Concerns were expressed about losing existing practices in each department that might differ from those in other departments. As much as possible, firefighters would like to see any changes in compensation models or rates not impact department operations any more than necessary. Firefighters requested in some cases that any operational impacts that might result from a new compensation model (the use of duty crews, for example) be identified and communicated to firefighters prior to implementation of a new compensation model, in order that they can then make informed decisions about the proposed compensation changes. Notwithstanding these expressed concerns, the SCRD likely will not be able to anticipate future operational changes, nor the extent to which those changes might be related to compensation rates. The SCRD should be cautious about making commitments related to future operational changes, in this period of change in the rural fire service sector.

4.6 Compensation Tied to Qualifications, Not Department Service Level

As noted above, several discussions about compensation led to discussion about whether rates of pay might be attached to individual qualifications or department service levels. These discussions naturally evolved to a consensus that for reasons of fairness, inter-operability between mutual aid departments, and the potential for movement of firefighters between departments, the SCRD should encourage professional development for all firefighters, regardless of the service level of their fire department. That encouragement could be reflected by compensating individuals based on their level of achieved qualification, not based on their department's service level. This would likely encourage professional development, improve inter-operability between SCRD fire departments, and support current members in joining other SCRD fire departments if their work or residency results in their relocating within the SCRD. It was pointed out that firefighters trained to a higher level than their department's service level would be beneficial, and all firefighters should be encouraged to develop professionally.

4.7 Operational Effectiveness

While not discussed broadly in group engagement sessions, some chief officers expressed the growing need for a compensation model that would enable them to engage POC firefighters for

special assignment work,⁴ compensating them on an hourly basis for that work. A new compensation model should facilitate an expected increase in the use of firefighters for what is generally termed “special duty” work in the future.

4.8 Total Compensation Package

Some feedback was received expressing interest in improved benefits as part of a total compensation package. The SCR D already provides a benefit package that is as good as or better than many other regional districts.⁵ While the SCR D should calculate the total compensation package provided to firefighters relative to other jurisdictions, the base wage rates need to be competitive with those paid in other jurisdictions. In other words, providing better (more costly) benefits likely will not prevent firefighters from comparing wage rates to other jurisdictions, and advocating for parity on wage rates only. The SCR D should be cautious about increasing costs related to benefits while its hourly wage rates are lower than market rates.

Similar to the issue of benefits, the SCR D should also consider the compensation provided to Firefighter Associations, and specifically what the SCR D intends to receive in return for that compensation.

If the SCR D implements a POC compensation model, all other forms of compensation should be discontinued and folded into the new model.

4.9 Associations

Some feedback was received from firefighters, expressing concern that a transition to a POC model might affect the current practice of the SCR D providing some funding directly to firefighter Associations. If the SCR D adopts a POC hourly wage rate model, it should also transition as much as is practical, away from directly funding Associations. The SCR D could assess the specific intended uses of the funds that are transferred directly to Associations, determine the value of those services to the SCR D, and match funding levels to those services. Any funds currently being provided directly to Associations other than what is required for the Associations to provide specific services could be redirected to firefighter compensation.

The SCR D could offer a payroll deduction process through which firefighters could pay dues to their Associations, thus ensuring the continued viability of those Associations, with the Associations properly deriving at least a portion of their revenues from their members.

⁴ “Special Assignment Work” or “Special Duties” is a catch-all phrase used in this report to cover any assignment other than training or emergency response and related administrative work that a chief officer might assign. Special Assignment Work or Special Duties could include (but would not be limited to) public engagement on behalf of the department, routine maintenance work in or outside of a fire hall, delivery of apparatus to a servicing facility, or being on duty at a fire hall.

⁵ Dave Mitchell & Associates Ltd., *Regional District Fire Service Compensation Review and Benchmarking* (2023).

Otherwise, there is potential that the total compensation package value will not be clearly understood.

The SCR D should endeavour to enter into agreements with Associations related to any funding provided directly, any services provided in return by the Associations, and any dues deduction and transfer arrangements.

5. Summary

Each of the four firefighter groups engaged fully and were respectful while demonstrating their passion about the service they provide to their communities. There was broad and consistent individual commitment demonstrated to fire department teams and the communities that they serve. Two department groups expressed their clear support for a transition to a POC model, and a waning of their patience for progress on that front.

The other two department groups also support the transition to a POC model but demonstrated some internal division on that model for several reasons. The firefighters in Egmont are concerned about the affordability of the POC model in their service area, and that the associated cost increase might cause fire protection service to be discontinued in their community. The firefighters in the other department are concerned that implementation of an SCRD-wide compensation model might affect some of their members negatively, and that there might be related operational changes that impact their team camaraderie, which is high. Team camaraderie is a point of pride and satisfaction within all fire department groups.

Based on the feedback received, if SCRD does not proceed with implementing a POC model in 2025, there would need to be careful considerations given to the risks associated with such a decision. If the SCRD does proceed with implementing a POC model in 2025, it will need to engage regularly with firefighters to refine the model and communicate thoroughly with them about the model and any anticipated impacts.

5.1 Consideration

As addressed above, the SCRD needs to ensure and to develop effective communication and engagement pathways to facilitate the discussion about compensation and other non-operational matters.

Some key principles should be considered, and reflected in any new compensation policy and structure, including:

- uninterrupted service provision;
- transparency, fairness and equity;
- affordability in all service areas;
- administrative efficiency;
- cost certainty - supporting the SCRD and constituents in five-year financial planning; and
- a model that remains effective through changing times, is scalable and adaptable.

The above goals can be achieved through adoption of a POC system, supported by an hourly wage rate matrix that bases wage rates on individual qualifications or rank. The hourly rates of pay should be such that initially, no individual or group is exposed to a decrease in compensation. Rate increases over a five-year period should at least offset the impacts of

inflation, while also narrowing any compensation gaps identified in the 2023 compensation review⁶ or future reviews and smoothing any impact on taxation rates.

Given that two SCRD fire departments appear more ready than the others for implementation of a POC compensation model, the SCRD could consider the potential to implement a POC model in 2025 in two departments and continue to engage with the other two departments to resolve outstanding concerns. If the SCRD was to take this course of action, it should be sure to adopt a compensation model initially that can eventually work for all SCRD fire departments.

The SCRD should develop processes that facilitate healthy and effective current and future discussions about compensation, and other emerging matters on which the SCRD may want to engage its firefighter workforce. Given some of the change drivers noted in this report, not the least of which is the changed/defined role of chief officers as agents of the employer in the SCRD's workplaces, the SCRD should implement organizational structures that support functional dialogue with elected representatives of firefighters. Firefighters should select their representatives, and the SCRD should respect the role of those representatives.

5.1.1 Egmont

The circumstances in Egmont bear special consideration. The relatively small tax base in that service area results in service costs being higher per assessed value than in other service areas despite the Department's operating budget already being modest. Any increase in costs related to service provision will have a greater effect on taxation than in other service areas.

Application of a POC model in Egmont should not proceed without further consideration and discussion of several factors affecting the cost impact, such as:

- it was reported that a high percentage of calls for service are related to medical incidents or electrical lines down. In the case of electrical lines being down, crews can be tied up at scenes for four or more hours. The SCRD might consider management measures such as:
 - reducing the type of medical calls to which Egmont Volunteer Fire Department responds, thereby reducing related compensation costs. Pre-hospital care is a provincial government responsibility
 - reducing the length of time that Department crews remain at the scene of electrical wires down. Scenes can be made safe by deployment of road barricades, and/or Ministry of Highways resources can be requested to attend the scene immediately. Provincial road safety is a provincial government responsibility, and electrical wires down are a BC Hydro responsibility
 - responding to some call types with fewer members, thereby reducing related compensation costs
- estimated costs related to POC compensation can be calculated, and the cost control value of the above-noted measures can be assessed against potential negative consequences of each measure; and

⁶ Ibid.

- making any necessary bylaw changes to provide for the additional budget funds required.

After operational changes have been considered, the cost impacts of implementing a POC model in Egmont are better-known, and any required bylaw changes have been adopted, then the SCRD can implement the POC model in Egmont.

6. Recommendations

Reco #	Recommendation
1.	Given the prevalence of the practice of compensating firefighters on a paid on call basis by way of wages, the Sunshine Coast Regional District should proceed with establishing a paid on call compensation structure for its firefighters, preferably based upon the Duncan/North Cowichan matrix as an example.
2.	The Sunshine Coast Regional District model should ideally incorporate paid on call firefighter wage rates based on individual firefighting qualifications and any appointments to officer positions, not based on fire department service levels.
3.	The Sunshine Coast Regional District model should ideally evolve to incorporate the same wage rates across its four fire departments and enable variations on the application of those rates by way of operational guidelines within each department.
4.	The SCRD should ensure that it clearly is presenting the total compensation package – including benefits, training or other pay, and amounts paid to the fire department associations – when comparing and communicating about firefighter compensation in the SCRD relative to other jurisdictions.
5.	In establishing wage rates, the Sunshine Coast Regional District should ensure that no individual is exposed to a reduction in compensation as a direct result of newly established wage rates.
6.	In establishing wage rates and reducing any gaps relative to wages paid in other jurisdictions, the Sunshine Coast Regional District should phase in the system over several years to smooth the impact of any increase in fire department budgets and taxation.
7.	The Sunshine Coast Regional District should develop procedures to improve communications processes with its firefighters, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• having each firefighter group, potentially via the Associations, nominate and elect one or more employee representatives from amongst its firefighters;• establishing committees/working groups that include firefighter representatives to address a range of issues such as compensation, firefighter health and wellness, and occupational health and wellness.
8.	The Sunshine Coast Regional District should establish, by way of policy or operational guidelines, procedures that improve its on-going communications with firefighters in each department. Such processes should be informed by committees or working groups, and need to demonstrate the Sunshine Coast Regional District's commitment to collaboration with its fire department members.

Reco #	Recommendation
9.	The Sunshine Coast Regional District should consider entering into agreements with the Associations, covering the role of each Association and any dues collection by the Sunshine Coast Regional District on behalf of an Association.
10.	The Sunshine Coast Regional District should respect the role of the firefighter representatives selected to represent their Department members, and help them operate effectively in that role.
11.	The Sunshine Coast Regional District model should discontinue the historical funding of Associations and re-address methods to fund services provided by the Associations. Firefighters should be offered the option to contribute dues to their Association by way of payroll deduction. The Sunshine Coast Regional District should support the firefighters and the Associations as necessary through this transition.

6.1 Proposed SCRD Compensation Matrix

The hourly rates of pay within the wage rate matrix below are not recommended per se but are an example to illustrate how a shift could occur over a five-year period, supporting the SCRD's financial planning needs, addressing firefighter needs and concerns, and achieving the goals of transparency, fairness and affordability.

The hourly pay matrix below reflects the following considerations:

- standard wage rates across all SCRD fire departments, based on individual certification or rank;⁷
- application of a matrix like that used by the Duncan and North Cowichan, which would best position the SCRD to adapt to future compensation changes in the sector;
- the January 1, 2025 hourly wage rates set out below were calculated utilizing the current compensation paid to Captains in the Gibsons Fire Department as a base, assuming:
 - the Gibsons Captain compensation reflects the highest level of compensation within the SCRD fire departments, excepting chief officers;

⁷ While the wage rates would apply equally across the SCRD departments, in Egmont where the service level is Exterior Operations, and all firefighters were reported to be qualified to only the exterior level, those firefighters would receive a lower wage rate even though the matrix applies equally across the SCRD. Similarly, Egmont's lower call volume would result in lower overall earnings for firefighters than in busier departments, providing for affordability while maintaining fairness.

- the Gibson Captain \$25 per hour training wage rate is reflected within the \$6,000 annual stipend, compensating Captains for attending meetings, record keeping, and any other assigned duties.⁸
- there might be work involved for chief officers and the SCRD payroll department moving to hourly pay for firefighters; and
- the matrix shows the Duty Officer hourly wage rate at 25% of Captain hourly wage rate rather than a sum for a block of time. The Duty Officer rate is paid to ensure that the individual in question is available for a call-out; once a call-out occurs, the rate shifts to the appropriate hourly pay rate.

Table 1: Compensation Example Matrix

Department-Specific Minimum Requirements	Classifications	%	Hourly Wage Rates				
			Jan 1, 2025	Jan 1, 2026	Jan 1, 2027	Jan 1, 2028	Jan 1, 2029
Employment entry minimums	Firefighter 1 (Recruit)	70%	\$15.22	\$	\$	\$	\$
Exterior Ops	Firefighter 2 (Exterior)	85%	\$18.47	\$	\$	\$	\$
Interior Ops & FR III	Firefighter 3 (Interior)	95%	\$20.65	\$	\$	\$	\$
NFPA 1001	Firefighter 4 (Full Service)	100%	\$21.74	\$22.83	\$23.97	\$25.17	\$26.43
NFPA 1001 + EVO/P&P + Class 3 with Air	Firefighter 5 (Full Service + Driver/Operator)	105%	\$22.83	\$	\$	\$	\$
FO I + TO I	Lieutenant	110%	\$23.91	\$	\$	\$	\$
FO II	Captain	115%	\$25.00	\$26.25	\$27.56	\$28.94	\$30.39
FO I	Duty Officer (on call pay)	25% of Captain	\$6.25	\$6.56	\$6.89	\$7.24	\$7.60

⁸ It was reported that, on average, incidents last 1.5 hours. If Captains work a further 30 minutes per incident performing incident reporting, they are currently being compensated for attending 120 incidents each per year, fewer if attendance at safety and officers' meetings are also factored in.

Notes

- The matrix indicates a wage rate of \$15.22 for Firefighter 1 (Recruit). This is below the minimum wage rate in BC. Although volunteer and POC firefighters are exempt from the minimum wage rate, the SCRD may opt to adjust the lowest wage rate at “70% but not lower than the minimum wage rate in BC.”
- The matrix indicates in the Jan 1, 2025, column, wage rates calculated from the current Captain compensation in Gibsons and District Fire Department. This is presented for demonstration purpose. The SCRD may decide to set different wage rates effective Jan 1, 2025.
- The matrix shows, for the purposes of discussion the effect of a 5% annual rate increase on the wage rates for Firefighter 4, Captain and Duty Officer. This is for demonstration purposes. The actual wage rates would be determined by the SCRD.
- In the first column, the matrix includes the minimum requirements for each classification. These minimum requirements are provided for demonstration purposes only. An actual SCRD wage matrix would include minimum requirements set by the SCRD. It is recommended that minimum requirements be department-specific to support any specific requirements in each department that should be addressed in the matrix and reflected in compensation rates.

7. Appendix A: District of North Cowichan Collective Agreement Compensation Matrix

SCHEDULE A - WAGES

NORTH COWICHAN FIRE DEPARTMENT

Rank	Pay Rate as at Ratification	Pay Rate June 30 2024	Pay Rate January 1 2025	Requirements
Firefighter Level 1	<u>Level 1</u> 58% Level I while in 1-6 month probation. \$17.14 70% Base Rate during months 7-12 \$20.69	<u>Level I</u> 58% Level I while in 1-6 month probation. \$17.82 70% Base Rate during months 7-12 \$21.51	<u>Level 1</u> 58% Level I while in 1-6 month probation. \$18.54 70% Base Rate during months 7-12 \$22.37	As per application, testing, interview, criminal record search, class attendance, test & exam grades Other requirements as updated
Firefighter Level 2	<u>Level 2</u> 85% of Base Rate \$25.12	<u>Level 2</u> 85% of Base Rate \$26.12	<u>Level 2</u> 85% of Base Rate \$27.17	Exterior Firefighter ICS 100 BC Electrical Safety Hazmat Awareness WFFI
Firefighter Level 3	<u>Level 3</u> 95% Base Rate \$28.07	<u>Level 3</u> 95% Base Rate \$29.20	<u>Level 3</u> 95% Base Rate \$30.36	All above plus: FR 3 (placement subject to change by leadership team direction) ICS 200
Firefighter Level 4 (Base Rate)	<u>Level 4</u> 100% Base Rate \$29.55	<u>Level 4</u> 100% Base Rate \$30.73	<u>Level 4</u> 100% Base Rate \$31.96	All above plus: Completion of Interior Firefighter

Rank	Pay Rate as at Ratification	Pay Rate June 30 2024	Pay Rate January 1 2025	Requirements
				Marina Firefighting
Firefighter Level 5	<u>Level 5</u> 105% Base Rate \$31.03	<u>Level 5</u> 105% Base Rate \$32.27	<u>Level 5</u> 105% Base Rate \$33.56	All above plus: Full Service Firefighter Signed off as a driver operator on all apparatus Pumps and Pumping Course Hazmat Operations
Officer in Training	<u>Level 6</u> 110% Base Rate \$32.51	<u>Level 6</u> 110% Base Rate \$33.81	<u>Level 6</u> 110% Base Rate \$35.16	All above plus: ESM 1 Team Leader Exterior and Interior Training
Captain/TO	115% Base Rate \$33.98	115% Base Rate \$35.34	115% Base Rate \$36.76	All above plus: Fire Officer 1
Deputy Station Chief	120% Base Rate \$35.46	120% Base Rate \$36.88	120% Base Rate \$38.35	All above plus: Fire Officer 2 FSI 1
Station Chief	125% Base Rate \$36.94	125% Base Rate \$38.42	125% Base Rate \$39.95	All above plus: TBD

8. Appendix B: City of Duncan Compensation Matrix

DUNCAN FIRE DEPARTMENT

December 13, 2023



Qualifications for each classification will be set out in a General Operating Guideline and subject to change depending on operational requirements.

Current Classification	New Classification	Hourly Pay Rates			
		January 1, 2023	September 1, 2023	June 30, 2024	January 1, 2025
** See note	Firefighter 1 A		\$ 17.14	\$ 17.82	\$ 18.54
** See note	Firefighter 1 B		\$ 20.69	\$ 21.51	\$ 22.37
Firefighter – Exterior (no badge)	Firefighter 2	\$ 17.05	\$ 25.12	\$ 26.12	\$ 27.17
	Firefighter 3		\$ 28.07	\$ 29.20	\$ 30.36
Firefighter – Interior (badge)	Firefighter 4	\$ 17.46	\$ 29.55	\$ 30.73	\$ 31.96
Firefighter – Full Service (after 4 yrs)	Firefighter 5	\$ 18.02	\$ 31.03	\$ 32.27	\$ 33.56
Lieutenant	Lieutenant	\$ 19.06	\$ 32.51	\$ 33.81	\$ 35.16
Captain	Captain	\$ 20.87	\$ 33.98	\$ 35.34	\$ 36.76
Assistant Chief	Assistant Chief	\$ 21.64	\$ 35.46	\$ 36.88	\$ 38.35
Deputy Chief	Deputy Chief	\$ 22.63	\$ 36.94	\$ 38.42	\$ 39.95

****NOTE:** The classifications of Firefighter 1A and Firefighter 1B are new. Effective September 1, 2023, Firefighters who are in their first six months of employment will be classified as Firefighter 1A. Firefighters who are in their seventh to twelfth month of employment will be classified as Firefighter 1B.

Notwithstanding the above, any firefighters who are members of the department on September 1, 2023 and who have not yet achieved Exterior Operations level, will be classified as Firefighter 1B.