



Media Release

MR# TFS-2026-05

For Immediate Release: April 3, 2026

RE: Sackville Fire & Rescue Montana Consulting Workplace Assessment Actions

According to file information from the former Town of Sackville, in May of 2021 the Town *undertook a comprehensive workplace assessment of Sackville Fire Department and its operations after allegations of personnel issues. The Town retained the services of Montana Consulting Group to complete the workplace assessment to gain an understanding of the perceptions and issues within the work environment to determine what outcomes and actions would be available to provide better working conditions.*

Outcomes and recommendations of the assessment focused on good governance, improving HR practices, ensuring legal compliance, and overall authority and structure of Sackville Fire & Rescue.

During a Special Meeting of Council held on March 16th, Tantramar Council passed the following motion:

#26-048 MOVED BY COUNCILLOR MATT ESTABROOKS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR MICHAEL TOWER THAT FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF THE LEGAL OPINION FROM MOTION #26-045 AND REVIEW OF SECTION 82(2) OF RTIPPA, COUNCIL AUTHORIZES THE CAO TO RELEASE THE IMPLEMENTED ACTIONS FROM THE WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT OF SACKVILLE FIRE & RESCUE. AYE VOTES RECORDED BY MAYOR ANDREW BLACK, DEPUTY MAYOR DEBBIE WIGGINS-COLWELL, AND COUNCILLORS ALLISON BUTHCER, MATT ESTABROOKS, JOSH GOGUEN AND MICHAEL TOWER. NAY VOTES RECORDED BY COUNCILLORS BARRY HICKS AND BRUCE PHINNEY, MOTION CARRIED.

ACTIONS:

1. Update the governing by-law of Sackville Fire:

- On August 9th, 2022, Town of Sackville Council passed 3rd reading of [BY-LAW NO 280 A BY-LAW GOVERNING THE FIRE DEPARTMENT OF THE TOWN OF SACKVILLE](#)
- This by-law established authority and structure, formally creating the fire department under the governing municipality and defined ranks and their roles and responsibilities, chain of command and scope of authority, member appointment for employment with the department, qualifications of members, remuneration, reports, training, conduct at calls, general provisions, types of calls to respond to.
- By-law No. 248 was repealed.

2. **Clarify how to proceed regarding safety, technical and personnel issues.**
 - The approval of By-law No 280 and [Policy 2022-08 The Sackville Fire Department](#) effective August 9, 2022.
3. **Finalize and formally document the Fire Chief's role**, responsibilities, and authority in clear governance leading to clear, shared understanding of the Fire Chief's authority, duties, and accountability.
4. **Strengthening governing documents through the development of By-law No. 280**, using By-law 248 as a guide while removing section(s) not in use, as well as Policy 2022-08. Updating By-law & Policy language to address safety, technical and personnel issues.
5. **External 3rd Party training completed under [OHSA General Regulation 91-191](#), policy created. Current corporate version [Municipality of Tantramar Workplace Harassment and Violence Policy No. 2024-10](#)**
 - Building awareness of respectful behavior and what constitutes harassment and ensuring Firefighters understand the complaint process.
6. **Update Confidentiality Agreement and ensuring Firefighters understand obligations.**
7. **Firefighter status updated to "employee" in [By-law 280 definition 1\(j\)](#).**
 - "Member" means a part-time employee of the Town working within the Department as a firefighter and includes all Officers except the Fire Chief.
8. **Hiring process with clear criteria implemented for Officers under [Policy 2022-08](#), aligning with modern HR and OH&S expectations.**
 - 4.10 Officer Positions
 - *The Town will provide an opportunity for current Members to apply for Officer positions.*
 - *Officer vacancies will typically be announced and posted. Candidates shall be assessed in accordance with their experience, knowledge, ability and qualifications.*
 - *Applicants with the necessary qualifications and experience will be interviewed for suitability for the position.*
 - *Members who apply for the position and are not chosen shall receive constructive feedback about what the skills, knowledge, training and experience they should pursue in order to increase their potential to be successful when they apply for an open position in the future.*
 - *If a Member is successful in being selected for the new position, they will be required to serve a probationary period of 6 months. The Fire Chief will conduct a performance evaluation during the probationary period and upon completion of their probationary period.*
9. **Attendance administration clarified under [Policy 2022-08](#) outlining requirements for training and calls**

7.0 Attendance

All Members are expected to attend minimum of:

- 60% of all training practices, and
- 40% of all emergency calls

All Members are responsible for participating in Fire Department training activities and for maintaining personal and professional competence relative to the skill and knowledge levels required of the perspective position within the Fire Department. Any Member failing to meet these attendance requirements, will have their status reviewed by the Fire Chief.

- 10. Ongoing opportunities and schedule for objective insight into Fire Department leadership via colleagues and firefighters.**
- 11. Amend and/ or repeal any documents referencing Sackville Fire Association with consideration to the Association being a separate entity from the Town.**
- 12. Ongoing review of Fire Department governing documents ensuring safety and mitigating risk, ultimately improving operational effectiveness and continuous improvement specifically; [By-law 280 Sec. 6\(c\)](#):**
 - The Fire Chief shall:
 - (c) in consultation with the other Officers (who, in turn, shall seek input from the Members in their respective companies) prepare such policies and procedures as may be necessary for the care and protection of the property of the Department, for the conduct of the Members and generally for the effective and efficient operation of the Department and, in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer, present such policies to Council for review and adoption.
- 13. Ongoing progress for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) specifically related to the operation of fire department apparatus.**
- 14. Ongoing progress for SOP creation from Standard Operating Guideline(s) (SOG) specifically related to seat assignment** ensuring firefighters are seated based on training, role and safety requirements- not by habit or preference. It strengthens command, reduces risk, protects newer members, and provides clear accountability if an incident occurs.
- 15. Leaves from Work clarified under [Policy 2022-08](#), formalizing process for return to work.** Informal process utilized to date, process will be made official and communicated to firefighters to ensure consistent application and fair and equitable treatment of all members.
 - Leaves from Work
 - Statutory Leaves

Provisions in the *Employment Standards Act* govern the following statutory leaves:

 - Bereavement
 - Compassionate Care
 - Family Responsibility
 - Jury Duty
 - Parental
 - Reservists
 - Medical
 - Critically Ill Family Member
 - Domestic Violence

6.02 Discretionary Personal Leave

Permission to take discretionary personal leave may be granted for up to 12 months, with a minimum of one month written notice, on approval of the Fire Chief, providing the leave does not conflict with the business and scheduling needs of the Town. During the leave, if the Member wishes to extend the personal leave, a three (3) week written notice must be submitted to the Fire Chief for approval.

16. Ongoing inter-agency operational coordination to keep responding agencies' roles and responsibilities clear.

17. Occupational Health and Safety legislation implemented into training sessions, demonstrating due diligence and reinforcing safety expectations and requirements before firefighters are operating under pressure. Training ensures OHSA principles are applied consistently, firefighters are applying them instinctively, making safe decisions without hesitation while supporting officers enforcing safety rules, ultimately keeping firefighters and the public safe while adhering to safety legislation.

18. Clarification of *Fit for Duty* requirements in [By-law 280](#)

(h) "Fit for Duty" means an individual is in a physical, mental, and emotional state which enables the Member to perform essential tasks of a firefighter.

9. (a) Every applicant to become employed as a Member must be Fit for Duty to perform their duties as a Member. Each applicant shall undergo to a medical examination as set out in Schedule 'A' attached hereto, as well as physical agility and phobia testing as established by the Fire Chief from time to time. Prior to being hired, Applicants will also be required to attend an orientation session and provide a criminal record check at the expense of the Town.

(b) Every Member must remain Fit for Duty to perform their duties at all times. At their discretion, the Fire Chief can request, at the Town's expense, such additional detailed medical examination from any Member as any particular circumstance reasonably warrants to confirm the Member in question is, or remains, Fit for Duty.

19. HR Personnel Meeting(s) – confidential, undertaken by former Town of Sackville Administration.

20. Firefighter status amended in governing documents to reflect "employment" status. See #7.

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