

The Township of The Archipelago

Information Report to Council

Report No.: PROT-2026-03

Date: April 16, 2026

Originator: Liam Thompson, Coordinator Protective Services

Subject: Termination of a Municipal Forest Fire Management Agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources

BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services (AFFES) division can enter into mutual aid agreements with municipalities in providing wildland fire suppression. The Township of The Archipelago has maintained a long-standing agreement with AFFES for Forest Fire Management within our boundaries.

After recent discussions with AFFES staff and formal notification received on Friday, April 10th, 2026, AFFES is terminating the current agreement as of May 10th, 2026. After conducting legal review of all Forest Fire Management Agreements, two factors were identified as needing to be met for municipalities to enter into an agreement:

1. As the agreement is formally a mutual aid agreement, municipalities are required to have and maintain a fire department with capacity to provide aid to AFFES in responding to and suppressing a wildland fire on Crown Land. In turn, AFFES also agrees to respond to wildland fires within the municipal boundary based on rates and fees provided in the agreement.
2. The municipality must train all staff assigned to fire operations up to the standard of SP103 with Air Attack Safety Training Module for Municipal Fire Operations.

As a result, all Forest Fire Management Agreements between AFFES and municipalities who do not meet the above criteria are pending termination. The Archipelago is one of those municipalities.

The agreement program is intended to leverage the capacity in municipalities to support Ministry wildland fire preparedness, and in turn, to leverage Ministry capacity to support municipalities in areas where their operations may have been historically challenged to respond on municipal land.

NEXT STEPS

Ultimately, the termination of the agreement will not impact wildland fire suppression services for the residents of the Township.

AFFES will remain the primary responder to Crown Land fires, even within the boundaries of the Archipelago. AFFES will still action on wildland fires on patented land, however the process will be slightly altered. Prior to actioning on a patented land wildfire, AFFES will need permission from the Township. This will be accomplished through the designation of a primary contact position (Coordinator, Protective Services) who will be available for contact 24/7 during the fire season. An alternate phone tree will also be created should the primary contact be unavailable.

For reference, since 2016, AFFES has responded to 47 wildland fires within the Archipelago. 45% of these fires were located on Crown Land.

Now that the current Forest Fire Management Agreement is pending termination, the primary difference is cost and pay structure. Under the previous agreement, the pay structure was annual based on hectares of coverage plus an additional cost per wildfire for certain equipment such as air attack, although at a reduced rate. The annual fee in 2025 was approximately \$15,500 and we did not pay for any additional suppression efforts.

Moving forward, the Township should expect to receive a bill for each fire actioned by the Ministry on patented land as opposed to the yearly and reduced Forest Fire Management Agreement charges. In 2025 there were 5 wildland fires actioned on by AFFES, 1 of which was located on patented land at a size of 0.1 hectares.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This direction is in alignment with the following Strategic Priorities contained within our Strategic Plan:

- Protect & Preserve

CONCLUSION

The Forest Fire Protection agreement between the Township of The Archipelago and the Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services branch of the Ministry of Natural Resources has been terminated. In summary, the overall suppression of wildland fires in the Township will remain the responsibility of AFFES and the level of service will remain unchanged. The Ministry remains responsible for managing wildland fires on Crown Land.

The main difference that emerges from not having an agreement revolves around the pay structure. The Township will be transitioning to a pay per service approach as opposed to the annual fee plus reduced service rates outlined in the previous agreement. This pay structure will apply to wildfire suppression conducted by AFFES on municipal patented land.

Respectfully Submitted,



Liam Thompson
Coordinator, Protective Services

I concur with this report
and recommendation,



John MacKinnon, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

1. Municipal Agreement Archipelago Termination Letter