



Metchosin Fire Hall Project – Question & Answer Update #1

September 10, 2025

Planning is underway to address critical operational, structural and safety deficiencies in Metchosin's Fire Hall. Below are answers to questions about this effort, including those on:

- Longstanding inadequacies with the Fire Hall
- Process to date
- The current option being considered to address issues
- Financial matters
- Next steps

Q1: What are the concerns with the current Fire Hall?

The existing Fire Hall is outdated, does not comply with modern building codes, and fails to meet the requirements for a post-disaster emergency facility. These issues exist within the Fire Hall's two main components: 1) the **Administrative / Sleeping Quarters** building and 2) the **Apparatus Bay**:

- Neither component meets the requirements of a post-disaster building standard.
- Major seismic deficiencies exist in both components.
- Serious occupational health and safety deficiencies exist with ventilation, decontamination and gear storage. These and other issues put the building below the standards set out by WorkSafeBC and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).
- Other issues include poor roof structures, inadequate kitchen and bathroom facilities, electrical and plumbing concerns and space inefficiencies.

Q2: What are the issues with the Admin / Sleeping Quarters?

Built in 1950s and 60s by volunteers, the Admin component is made of cinder blocks filled with cement, in what is known as an unreinforced masonry (URM) building. URM are among the highest risk buildings in terms of withstanding major earthquakes.

This was confirmed in a 2010 engineering assessment of the administrative building. The report stated that this building would **“collapse or partially collapse under**

expected current Code related seismic forces.” The report also noted that an upgrade of the building (rather than replacement) would not be cost effective.

Additional concerns:

- Roof issues, including continual leaks, as well as seismic and snow load deficiencies.
- Poor ventilation in the sleeping quarters and throughout the admin building.
- Inadequate kitchen, which is not compliant with the BC Building Code or VIHA Health Regulations.
- Inadequate washroom facilities.
- No sprinkler or fire protection systems throughout the building.
- Does not meet accessibility requirements.
- Asbestos flooring.
- Inadequate laundry facilities.
- Old plumbing and electrical systems in constant need of repair

Q3: What are the issues with the Apparatus Bay?

Crews and the five main firefighting vehicles deploy from this building. Completed in the mid-1990s, this apparatus bay has recently been reviewed for seismic stability and occupational health and safety (OHS) performance. Engineering reports, particularly that done by [Skyline Engineering in 2025](#), have identified serious structural deficiencies:

- The seismic capacity of the overall apparatus bay building is less than half the current code for post-disaster buildings.
- The state of the roof connections is highly concerning: “The roof diaphragm and connections to the concrete walls of the building are particularly deficient.... The capacity of the connections between the roof and the ceiling to the walls is now estimated to be in the order of 10% of the current Code requirements.”
- The north and south elevations of the building (where the overhead doors are located) have minimal walls to resist seismic forces and are noted as the weakest portion of the building.

Numerous occupational health and safety issues exist in the apparatus bay:

- Limited space for firefighters to move around the vehicles.

- Poor ventilation, particularly in terms of diesel exhaust.
- Inadequate decontamination space. This is critical for crews returning from fires, where they may face a range of contaminants, including asbestos, volatile organic compounds, hydrogen cyanide, lead, arsenic, and many other substances.
- Poor cleaning and drying facilities for the firefighters' gear.
- No sprinkler systems.
- Inadequate washroom and shower facilities.

Information on these issues can be found in the [2025 Fire Hall Building Assessment](#) report.

Q4: What's the District doing to address these issues?

The issues with the Fire Hall, and particularly the administration building, have been known for many years. Below are key milestones in the process to find solutions:

- January 2022. The Fire Hall Steering Committee (FHSC) appointed by District Council. The FHSC is composed of current and former fire fighters, as well as those with experience in municipal planning, engineering and emergency response.
- May 2022. Engineering report on apparatus bay notes structural deficiencies with building. ([See report](#))
- Spring 2023. Council approval of funds for a Fire Hall feasibility assessment.
- Spring 2024. Johnson Davidson Architects (JDa) selected as the successful proponent to complete the feasibility assessment.
- Fall 2024 to Spring 2025. Engagement between District staff, FHSC and JDa on the feasibility assessment.
- April 2025. Engineering report on apparatus bay notes structural deficiencies with building. ([See report](#))
- May 2025. Details on the Strategic Priorities Fund infrastructure grant program are announced; potential project funding of \$7 million.
- May 2025. Feasibility assessment (titled "Building Assessment") completed. ([See report](#)), and a preferred option (Option 1A) for moving forward.
- June 2025. Joint meeting of Council and FHSC to discuss the feasibility assessment. JDa presentation on the Building Assessment and Option 1A.

- June 2025. Council vote in support of the preferred option (option 1A) for the purposes of moving forward with next steps in obtaining Class D Costing Estimates for potential application to the Strategic Priorities Fund.
- August 2025. Council vote to proceed with option 1A as its submission to the Strategic Priorities Fund grant program after reviewing cost estimate information.

Q5: Why was Johnston Davidson Architecture (JDa) selected to conduct the feasibility assessment?

JDa is one of Canada's most experienced architectural firms in terms of fire hall design. Established in 1976, JDa has completed over 65 fire halls projects across Western Canada, including extensive work with local governments in BC. The firm has expertise in working with wood structures and LEED/sustainability concepts. Their clients include Burnaby, Salt Spring Island, Nelson, Victoria and many other communities. JDa was selected following a request for proposals (RFP) process and a review by the FHSC of other firms that responded to the RFP.

Q6: What is Option 1A?

Here are the key elements of this option:

- Full replacement of the administrative building and the apparatus bay with a new building that addresses both the seismic deficiencies and the occupational health and safety issues.
- The administration component is planned as a two-storey structure to include sleeping quarters, offices, training spaces, washrooms, wellness facilities, kitchen, and other space to meet day to day needs.
- The apparatus side would include proper room for the fire fighting vehicles and equipment, a separate area for turnout gear storage, a dedicated gear wash/dry room, decontamination area, space for the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) maintenance/refilling, and other space to meet day to day operational needs.
- The new facility would have dedicated space for functions related to the emergency operations centre (EOC), including a dedicated emergency communications room, and storage space for EOC equipment.
- Space for parking, an outdoor training area, a hose tower and other operational needs would be included.
- Would be built in the adjacent field east of the current Fire Hall. This field currently serves as open space and as overflow parking for community events.

In August, Council voted to submit the preferred option for a financial grant from the Strategic Priorities Fund.

Q7: Why is Council applying now for the Strategic Priorities Fund grant?

The Strategic Priorities Fund is focused on local government infrastructure projects, including Fire Halls, with as much **as \$7 million available** for specific projects. The program is funded through the federal government's Canada Community Building Fund (formerly known as the Gas Tax) and is administered by the [Union of British Columbia Municipalities](#).

Here are some important points about this program:

- A single grant intake is planned for 2025, with the application deadline on September 12, 2025.
- The date of the next grant intake is unclear. The first version of the SPF had multiple years between intakes, with these occurring in 2015, 2017 and 2022.
- For Metchosin, a delay of even two years would likely push the potential of building a new Fire Hall to at least 2030, if not longer. A delay would also increase the cost of building with potentially no commensurate increase in funding.

Q8: What if we do not receive any grant funding, or receive less than expected?

In that case, District Council and staff will re-evaluate our approach to addressing the significant issues with both the administrative building and the apparatus bay. This may involve exploring new approaches to funding and timing in terms of addressing the highest priorities around seismic and safety deficiencies.

With the potential of \$7 million in funding, success in the Strategic Priorities Fund has clear advantages for moving ahead.

Q9: What are the advantages of Option 1A?

- Initial cost estimates show that building a new facility is actually less expensive than other options. The estimates for two options, done as Class D estimates, were discussed by [Council on August 20, 2025](#) (see reports beginning on p.3)
- Building new allows for a greater degree of control over structural design / construction as well as the cost.

- Allows for the continued use of the existing fire hall during the construction process, providing for uninterrupted emergency response.
- Allows for the potential reuse of the current buildings for non-emergency uses.
- The new site contains more space for movement of the fire apparatus, parking, training and other uses.

The advantages / disadvantages are further outlined in the [May 2025 Building Assessment Report](#).

Q10: The site proposed for the new facility is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) – how is Council addressing this?

In order for the new facility to be built on this location, the District will be required to apply to the Agricultural Land Commission for either 1) a non-farm use for the land covered by the construction; or 2) a full removal of the municipal land parcel (4450 Happy Valley Rd) from the ALR.

A report on these options is expected in late September or early October.

Q11: Were other options assessed?

Yes. The June 2025 Building Assessment covered a number of options, including:

- New build on existing site with full demolition of existing facility.
- New build of the administration side on existing site with retention of existing apparatus bay.
- New build on adjacent ALR site with retention of existing apparatus bay.

These options were assessed against service needs, code requirements and existing realities. More information is available in [JDa's Building Assessment Report](#).

Q12: How much could this project cost?

On [August 20, 2025 Council](#) reviewed cost comparisons of Option 1.A and an option that included a newly constructed administrative building and an upgrade of the apparatus bay, both in their current locations (identified as Option 3.2).

Construction	Option 1A	Option 3.2
Fire Hall	\$16,429,500	\$17,026,620
Contingency	\$4,928,850	\$5,107,986
Total	\$21,358,350	\$22,134,606

These costings were done as “Class D Estimates,” which means that the degree of accuracy is “plus or minus 20% to 30%.” Based on the cost estimate reports, the recommendation was to estimate on the high-end, so the +30% was included in the cost above as “Contingency”. This level of cost estimate is common when considering projects at a conceptual stage, with advanced estimates coming as planning progresses. The estimates for options 1A and 3.2 were completed by an independent firm that specializes in building cost estimates.

Based on the estimates provided, Option 1A (full rebuild) was found to be \$776,000 less expensive than Option 3.2.

Q13: Will the District need to borrow money?

No decision has been made about borrowing money to finance this project; however, the potential exists that this will be required.

Once the outcome of the grant process is known Council and staff will assess the best approach to financing the project, including the use of the District’s reserve funds, taxation, borrowing or other measures.

Two reports from District staff are of note:

- A review of the District’s reserves and finance options was provided on [June 9, 2025](#). (see page 47).
- A detailed look at the implications of borrowing was presented on [August 20, 2025](#) (see page 43).

Q14: What are the next steps?

Following the submission of the grant application to the Strategic Priorities Fund, work will continue on refining the project, including further work on building design. The goal here is to more clearly define the project, which will help gain greater clarity on cost.

Council will also be reviewing how to best approach the use of ALR land for the project. That discussion is expected to come in September or October.

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Do you have a question? Please submit this to info@metchosisin.ca. Additional Q&A updates will be developed as this process continues.