

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subject: Candidate Calls for Balanced Approach to Fire Service Expansion in Murray Ward

MURRAY WARD, QUINTE WEST — A proposal to add five full-time firefighter positions is prompting renewed focus on fiscal accountability and efficient service delivery within Quinte West's fire services.

"As we consider expanding full-time staffing, we have a responsibility to ensure decisions are grounded in both operational need and long-term financial sustainability," said Ed Santos, Murray Ward candidate.

The fully burdened cost of a full-time firefighter in Ontario—factoring in salary, benefits, OMERS contributions, and overhead—ranges from approximately \$130,000 to \$150,000 annually. Adding five full-time positions would introduce an estimated \$650,000 to \$750,000 in recurring annual costs, placing additional pressure on the municipal tax levy, including for Murray Ward residents.

"We need to be mindful that every permanent addition to payroll has a lasting impact on taxpayers," Santos added. "That's why it's critical we first ensure we are fully utilizing the resources we already have."

Santos emphasized the importance of optimizing deployment of Quinte West's existing paid-on-call (POC) firefighters, noting that these trained professionals are not always consistently dispatched to incidents within their qualifications.

"Our paid-on-call firefighters are highly trained, cost-effective, and ready to respond," Santos said. "They meet the same NFPA training standards as full-time crews and have repeatedly demonstrated their capability in real-world emergencies."

Recent recognition of POC firefighters for their life-saving response in the Hillside Meadows community underscores their value as a core component of the municipality's fire protection model.

"At a time when the City is managing infrastructure deficits and rising costs, we must take a balanced, fiscally sustainable approach," Santos said. "That means supporting and maximizing our current workforce before committing to significant, permanent expenditures."

Santos reaffirmed a commitment to responsible governance, emphasizing that public safety and fiscal stewardship must go hand in hand.

“Our goal should be clear: maintain strong emergency response services while protecting residents from unnecessary financial burden.”

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