

# Dust-covered 2002 report called for Gibson Street fire station

STEPHEN LLEWELLYN Fredericton Daily Gleaner  
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The city's newest fire station on Two Nations Crossing wasn't the location recommended by a 2002 fire station location study.

The 12-year-old consultant's report, called the Fredericton Fire Department Strategic Plan, was released by the city on its website this week even as a July 3 court date was set for a right-to-information appeal.

Community activist Julian Renaud decided to take the city to court over its refusal to release the document. The city claimed it couldn't find a copy of the report and refused to ask its author, former Fredericton fire chief Tom Powell, for another copy when The Daily Gleaner and others requested the study.

The 2002 consultant's report said a new fire station for the north side of the city should be located on Gibson Street.

"Immediate improvements to the fire protection of the city can be achieved by the consolidation of two stations into one location on the north side of the city," said the conclusion of a report by consultant T. L. Powell and Associates Ltd.

"The construction of a new station on Gibson Street will continue to provide the level of protection that the north side communities demand," said the report.

"The option meets the standard of 90 per cent coverage for categories 2, 3, and 4."

The report recommended the city close fire stations at MacLaren Avenue near the Devon Middle School and at Harrison Court in Marysville and build a new station on Gibson Street.

The consultant used a computer program called FireOpt to measure fire truck response times on city streets to determine the best site for the amalgamated fire station.

"The optimization program was run and it was determined that a location on Gibson Street anywhere at or between nodes 226, 253, 271, 274 and 321 would provide the optimum protection for the community," stated the report.

“Building a new station ... on Gibson Street can provide an acceptable level of protection to the city at a potentially lower cost with improved team capabilities with increased crew numbers responding from one station.”

City council eventually approved the closure of the fire stations at MacLaren Avenue and Harrison Court but ended up building a new \$9.35 million fire station on Two Nations Crossing in 2009.

The union representing Fredericton firefighters and the Daily Gleaner requested copies of the 2002 strategic plan, but city hall and the fire department said they could not find any copies.

The Daily Gleaner contacted T. L. Powell and Associates Ltd. in Ontario in May, 2013. Powell confirmed he still had a copy of the report in his files, but could only release it with permission of his client – the city. Mayor Brad Woodside refused in 2013 to release the report.

But Woodside announced Monday night at the regular council meeting the report would be released Tuesday. He did not explain why he decided to release the report.

Renaud was poised to attend court July 3 to try to have a judge force the study's release.