

Sustainable Public Safety Services for NB Cities

The yearly escalation of municipal Public Safety services costs has continued to force New Brunswick cities to make tough budget decisions in maintaining sustainable and fair tax rates.

The issue

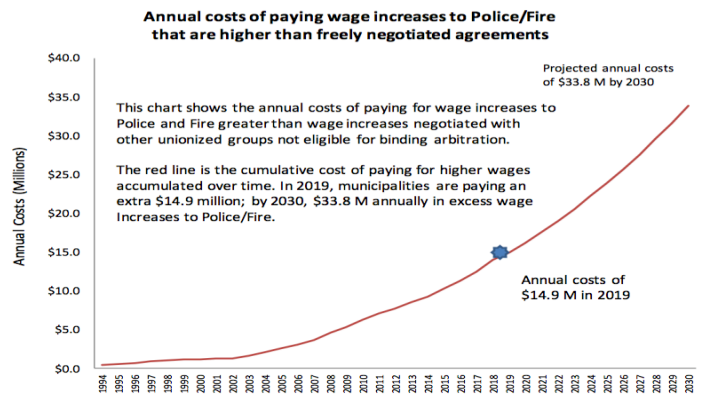
The current system of provincially mandated interest arbitration is causing NB cities key challenges including:

- Lack of consideration of taxpayer ability to pay
- Lack of incentive to negotiate openly with Public Safety unions
- Slow and expensive arbitration processes
- Awards that consistently exceed negotiated non-public safety settlements
- The Arbitration premium – even when settlements are negotiated, the increases are higher

Municipal fire and police costs have been growing at an unsustainable rate, largely due to the provincial arbitration process. The arbitrator’s decisions often forces cities to cut key services to pay for these unsustainable wage increases. In some cases, these “forced” wage increases are taking money away from essential public safety budget items like public safety training; updated or modernized equipment; and maintaining staffing levels; and may even lead cities to raise taxes.

Why this is important

Without changes to the arbitration process, the sustainability of our Cities is at risk. As a result of binding arbitration and rapidly escalating protective service wage increases, New Brunswick’s cities are faced with increasingly difficult budget decisions, including service reductions and tax increases.



The police and fire services in the province have seen between a 60% and 70% cumulative pay raise in the past 15 years.

The progress

The Cities of NB Association is encouraged by the provincial government’s openness to discuss this longstanding legislation concern.

The Ontario Government has recently acted to protect communities by reforming the interest arbitration process for resolving fire service collective agreements. The new legislation is grounded in the municipal reality and will provide new arbitral precedents that should start to address the need for sustainable public safety services.

What’s next

The 8 Cities are recommending that the Province of New Brunswick consider adopting the same legislation framework implemented by the Government of Ontario. See **Appendix A** for the Specific criteria of the Ontario Bill 57.

Interest Arbitration Should be Efficient, Accountable, Transparent while accounting for the fiscal health of the municipality

APPENDIX A

Specific Criteria – Ontario Bill 57

Criteria

(2) In making a decision, the arbitrator shall take into consideration all the factors the arbitrator considers relevant, including the following criteria:

1. A comparison, as between the employees and other employees in the public and private sectors, of the terms and conditions of employment.
2. A comparison of collective bargaining settlements reached in the same municipality and in comparable municipalities, including those reached by employees in bargaining units to which the *Labour Relations Act, 1995* applies, having regard to the relative economic health of the municipalities.
3. The economic health of Ontario and the municipality, including, but not limited to, changes to labour market characteristics, property tax characteristics and socio-economic characteristics.
4. The employer's ability to attract and retain qualified firefighters.
5. The interest and welfare of the community served by the fire department.
6. Any local factors affecting the community.

(2) Section 50.5 of the Act is amended by adding the following subsections:

Reasons

(4.1) When the arbitrator gives a decision, the arbitrator shall provide written reasons upon the request of either party.

Same

(4.2) The written reasons must clearly demonstrate that the arbitrator has considered the criteria on which a party has made submissions under subsection 50.3 (4), and may deal with other matters as the arbitrator considers appropriate.

**Interest Arbitration Should be Efficient, Accountable, Transparent
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