



STAFF REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: Chris Frotten & Dwayne Hunt

DATE: September 16, 2019

SUBJECT: Open Fire By-Law

ORIGIN

On September 2, 2019, the Barrington/Port La Tour Fire Department (BPLTFD) passed a motion to encourage the Municipality to enact a policy regarding campfires and fireworks in regard to Provincial regulations. They also requested that we consider making campgrounds adhere to Provincial regulations.

BACKGROUND

Since 2014, burn restrictions are in force in Nova Scotia from March 15 to October 15 and are posted online at <http://novascotia.ca/burnsafe>.

The online map and toll-free line ensure everyone knows the risks of wildfire in all areas of the province, each day. Previously, Nova Scotians needed to travel to a government office to purchase paper permits and pay a fee. The online approach saves on administration costs and increases fire safety and awareness. The map shows green, red, or yellow in each county, to let Nova Scotians know if it is safe to burn, unsafe to burn, or safe, with restrictions. Restrictions are updated daily at 2 p.m. to show if burning is permitted that day.

DISCUSSION

According to the Department of Lands and Forestry, Provincial, Private and Federal campgrounds are exempt from restrictions and can have campfires during green, yellow and red burn or no burn days. Where they would have to cease campfire activity is when the Minister would come out with a fire proclamation ceasing activity.

The attached document was provided by the Department to help us better understand the reasoning behind this exemption.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

N/A

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

PUBLIC CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATIONS

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

Although there are municipalities within the Province that have their own Open-Air Burning By-Laws (HRM, Cumberland County) we do not recommend implementing one in the Municipality for the following reasons:

1. There are already restrictions in place Provincially and there are clear reasons why campgrounds are an exception.
2. The enforcement of such a by-law would be very challenging. Not only would it be time consuming, but it would come at a cost (staffing, education, etc.)

SUGGESTED MOTION

Move to respond to the Barrington/Port La Tour Fire Department that the Municipality is not interested in developing a municipal by-law regulating campfires for the reasons above.

ATTACHMENTS

- Campfires – Campground vs. Home or Wilderness During a Fire Ban

CAMPFIRES IN FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL AND PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS

- Campfires are in an enclosure, metal ring, metal pit, or other approved appliance under 0.5m in size.
- Campfires have a clearance of 2 metres (6.5 feet) above and around from any flammable material
- Campfires are supervised either on site by campers, security, or park staff
- What's burned in campfires is regulated by wood sales/staff
- After campers check out campfire pits are properly suppressed and cleaned out by staff
- There are taps for water in different locations throughout the campground
- Staff when conditions are dry are more safety conscious and have preparedness and evacuation plans in place
- Site maintenance is constant, mowing, whipper snipping, cleanup etc.
- The Campground owner does have the discretion to cancel campfires if they feel they do not want the risk
- Campfires are prohibited outside of pits and especially when posted.

CAMPFIRES AT HOME OR IN WILDERNESS AREAS (CROWN)

- May or may not be in an approved campfire pit depending on location and person responsible
- Campfire clearances are not as stringent as campgrounds or nonexistent
- Campfires unsupervised at times (after bed, in morning, etc)
- Although regulations/act state otherwise often campfires are larger than 0.5m
- Items burned are outside of the regulated open burning bylaw
- Campfire pits are not suppressed properly
- Campfire pits are not cleaned regularly increasing accumulative debris and chance for ember escape
- No fixed or close by water source
- Not following the daily burn restrictions – these are in place for safety reasons
- Site not maintained (Mowed/snipped)
- Access to suppress a campfire/wildfire post escape harder depending on fire location

Campfires should be only kindling and firewood NOT pallets, pressure treated lumber, paper, garbage, etc. and should be kept small, supervised, extinguished fully and caution given on windy dry days as to whether you should have one!