

Fire station to be built on Maple Ave.

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The ideal site was the Gary Allan School site (the old Wigglesworth School beside the post office), but the Town could not work out a deal with the Halton District School Board, which owns the land.

"Maple Ave. came down to being the next best option. The response times are good and we didn't have to buy any new land. It wasn't the best site, but it was pretty darn close," Johnson said.

The current fire headquarters is the Town of Georgetown's former public works garage and works yard, and was never designed to be a fire station. When the fire service moved into that building in 1977, it was only meant to be a temporary measure.

"Thirty years later we're still in a temporary facility, and the building is really getting tired," said the fire chief.

Among its failings:

- It has only one operational shower, so when firefighters return from an incident they must go home to clean up.
- The roof leaks, so when it rains heavily computers must be covered in plastic.
- Ideally fire stations have their vehicle bays in the front of the building so vehicles can leave quickly as possible, but the Maple Ave. bays are in the back and trucks must pull around to the front to leave the property.
- There is not enough inside storage for the fire services equipment and vehicle, and some have to sit outside subjected to the elements.
- Staff are overcrowded in the building with some being forced to share desks and equipment.
- The heating system is on the verge of going, and Meads said only enough dollars have been put into the building just to keep it

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functional.

"We have made do with the building for many years now," said Johnson, "delaying construction until we could find the right location. Now is the time."

Johnson pointed out the money, under the Town's pay-as-you-go strategy, has already been set-aside in the Town coffers to build both the headquarters building and the Georgetown South satellite, eliminating the need to borrow any money. The satellite will serve the Georgetown South area of the town while the Maple Ave. station will continue to serve as the primary station for Georgetown.

While the fire department already gets high marks for its service, Johnson said with the addition of the new headquarters building and the satellite this service will only improve as the town grows.

"We're started down the road, and we're going in the right direction," said the fire chief, "and it'll see the town being in a much better position for fire services protection in the future."

(Cynthia Gamble can be reached at cgamble@independentfreepress.com)

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- SAT. DEC. 2 - 11 am at St. Alban's Church Glen Williams mrowe6@cogeco.ca