

The Municipality of Pontiac's Fire departments

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Quyon is the first area in the municipality to have established a fire department. It has existed since the end of the 1930s, according to Edmund Trudeau's account¹. In 1944, an article, relating to a fire in the Mulligan store that spread to two other houses, mentions that men from the Eardley and Shawville areas were called to the scene. In 1951, a large fire destroyed several buildings (the Fairbanks and Cobalt hotels, the Holmes family general store and the Rex Café) at the centre of the village of Quyon, causing damages estimated at over \$200,000. Unable to control and put out the blaze, the Quyon firefighters, under the direction of Robert Manary, had to call for the help from the Norway Bay, Hull and Aylmer Fire departments².

Several other major fires occurred during the 1950s, causing citizens to ask for the purchase of new equipment and the training of an additional fire brigade in order to ensure better protection. As the village still did not have a water supply system (it was completed only in 1958), firefighters had to pump water directly from the river using a portable pump.

In 1959, it's the Quyon Town Hall that went up in flames. This building, which also served as a cinema (and the basement as a prison!) burned down only minutes after the last showing. The Shawville firefighters were called to assist in order to keep the fire from spreading to the houses nearby. Another tragedy struck the community when the theater that housed the fire station in the basement completely burned down³. A new fire station was built on the same lot and the next step consisted of purchasing the first fire trucks⁴.

In the 1960s, several fires in Eardley and Luskville were proof of the existence of (and the need for) a fire department. Generally, the Aylmer or Quyon firefighters are those who intervene. Since their creation, the Canadian Legion in Quyon and the Lions Club have organized numerous collections of money or clothing for fire victims.

¹ Edmund Trudeau does not recall when the Quyon Fire department was established, but remembers having joined the department as a firefighter near the end of the 1930s: « 'In those days, we used to draw water with a horse and either sleigh or wagon, depending on the season', he said. The firefighters would also dip tubs into the Ottawa River from a raft. 'We also used a horse and stone-boat in the summer, to draw water up', he said. 'We drove the horse down into the water and it was half a mile up to the houses' », in « Past fire chief recall Quyon department's long history », *The Equity*, June 19, 2002.

² « \$200,000 Fire Destroys Quyon Centre Town », *The Equity*, 1951. Selon Edmund Trudeau, it also seems that the gas pump used to pump the water from the river had broken that night.

« Past fire chief recalls Quyon department's long history », *The Equity*, June 29, 2002.

³ « Serious Fire in Quyon demolished Theatre », *The Equity*, December 24, 1959.

⁴ « Past fire chief recalls Quyon department's long history », *The Equity*, June 19, 2002.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Claude Marcotte headed the Quyon Fire department. Fire alerts were dispatched to the store he operated with his wife H  l  ne. Having made safety his priority, none of his men were injured or killed during the fifteen years he spent at the head of the Fire department⁵. In June of 1988, his men, supported by the Bristol, Shawville and Lac-des-Loups Fire departments as well as the NCC and the Outaouais Conservation Society, for several days fought and controlled a fire that broke out in the forest north of Quyon, threatening the Gatineau Park⁶.

In 1985, Luskville finally has a Fire department. In 1989, the new Fire Chief for Quyon, L  o Ladouceur innovated by introducing a new shift system. Each firefighter team (there were six) consisted of a Chief, a driver and an intervener as a first aid provider. At each monthly exercise, the team must practice with the equipment, run the pumps, generator, oxygen masks, etc. Together, the team then have a discussion on which problems occurred and what could be improved. That year, the Quyon Fire department consisted of 38 volunteer firefighters⁷. Several donations in the form of money and equipment (including Air-pack respirators) were also made to the Quyon firefighters in 1990 from the Lionettes, the Lions and the Quyon Citizens Committee.

In the 1990s, the Quyon Fire department was very much involved in community activities. It participated in the Christmas and the Canada Day parades. Firefighters also organized information sessions, a "Fire chief for a day" event for children⁸ and fundraising activities such as BBQs and Firemen's Ball in order to purchase new equipment⁹. In June of 1992, the Quyon firefighters purchase a "new (1973)" pumper truck and equipment, thanks to donations collected by the community since September 1991, totalling more than \$13,000¹⁰. As for the Luskville volunteer firefighters, they held a fundraising campaign in order to be able to purchase an extrication device. Often the first responders on the scene of a traffic accident between Aylmer and Shawville, they were equipped with this precious and useful tool in April 1991¹¹. In 1994, the Quyon firefighters received a new emergency vehicle worth \$22,000¹², offered by the Lions Club.

Also in 1994, the Municipality of Pontiac planned the construction of a third Fire station in Breckenridge (corner of Highway 148 and Terry-Fox Road) in order to serve the citizens in the

⁵ « New Fire chief in Pontiac Municipality », *The Equity*, October 12, 1988.

⁶ « Forest fire at Quyon », *The Equity*, June 22, 1988.

⁷ « Quyon Firemen Innovate with Team System », *The Equity*, March 7, 1989.

⁸ « Young Quyon Chief sounds the alarm », *The Equity*, May 11, 1994.

⁹ See among others : « Red & White Barbecue benefits Fire Department », *The Equity*, June 26, 1991.

¹⁰ « Quyon Firefighters get new tanker truck », *The Equity*, August 26, 1992.

¹¹ « Luskville Fire Department updates equipment », *The Equity*, October 10, 1990.

¹² "Un v  hicule d'urgence est donn   aux pompiers volontaires", *Pontiac Journal*, 25 janvier 1994.

eastern sector of the municipality. The building was completed during the winter of 1996. Expansion of the Fire station in Quyon was also foreseen, in order to house all of the Quyon Fire department's trucks in one place¹³. Although the Quyon, Luskville and Breckenridge Fire departments worked together, it wasn't until 2003 that both services merged. The fire chiefs in the 2000s and 2010s were Tom Howard, then Mario Allen (by interim). In 2010, the Municipality of Pontiac adopted the *RCM des Collines-de-l'Outaouais' Fire Safety Coverage Plan* in which the three objectives are: knowledge of the environment, its special features and the areas that are most at risk; well-trained firefighters with adequate equipment; and prevention¹⁴.

Fire prevention is practiced in various ways in the municipality. In addition to making regular visits to primary schools, daycare centres, family residences, the Municipality of Pontiac firefighters meet various citizens groups, including the elderly. Coffee get-togethers and breakfasts served by the firefighters themselves are unique opportunities for citizens to interact with the members of their fire department¹⁵. The presence of firefighters was also noticed at various community and cultural events that were held through the years, such as Canada Day, Savour the Pontiac and more recently, the Pontiac Country Fair (Luskville Falls). In 2014, the Fire department established a "Fire cadet" program for girls and boys of the municipality, aged 15 and over¹⁶.

Mr. Michel Lemieux, assisted by Captains Serge Laforest and Chris Davis, is currently in charge of the Municipality of Pontiac's Fire department¹⁷. In its 2016 budget, the Municipality of Pontiac foresees purchasing a new emergency (rescue) vehicle, renewing the telecommunications system, in order to participate in the RMC des Collines' integrated system and making various improvements to the fire halls; and particularly, by building a new fire hall in Quyon, hopefully in 2018¹⁸.

Fire chiefs (list incomplete)

Quyon (end of the 1930s)	Eardley (1985 and later)
Edmund Trudeau	Gary Renaud
Robert Manary	André Renaud
Bill Burke	Willy Storing
N. W. Wall	Tom Howard
Claude Marcotte	
Richard Poirier	

¹³ « Pontiac plan third Fire Hall », *The Equity*, June 1, 1994.

¹⁴ See « [Fire prevention](#) », RCM des Collines de l'Outaouais website.

¹⁵ « QPF, Firefighters and CLSC team up for Meals on Wheels », *The Equity*, February 10, 1993.

¹⁶ « [2014 Fire Cadet program](#) », Municipality of Pontiac website.

¹⁷ « [The team](#) », Municipality of Pontiac website.

¹⁸ *Programme triennal d'immobilisations 2016-2018* (pdf document), Municipality of Pontiac.

Leo Ladouceur	
Tom Howard	
Mario Allen (by interim)	
Michel Lemieux	