

Subject: Ottawa Fire Services 2021 and 2022 Annual Report

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**Report to Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee on 21
September 2023**

and Council 27 September 2023

Submitted on September 12, 2023 by Paul Hutt, Chief, Ottawa Fire Service

**Contact Person: Dean Johnson, Specialist Strategic Programs and Projects,
Business and Technical Support Services**

613-552-6518, Dean.Johnson@ottawa.ca

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a summary of Ottawa Fire Services' activities during 2021 and 2022, including performance data and projects and programs in place to mitigate increased demand for service and allow the service to continue providing excellent service to residents as the city grows. This report also fulfills the annual reporting requirement under the Fire Services Establishing By-law (No. 2009-319).

Assumptions and analysis

Ottawa Fire Services is responsible for public fire safety education, application of fire safety standards and enforcement, and emergency response for fire suppression, medical emergency calls, rescue operations and other special operations.

In 2021 and 2022 Ottawa Fire Services continued to experience impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ottawa Fire Services responded to fewer than average incidents in the first two years of the pandemic, however those numbers have since returned to pre-pandemic numbers. In 2021 and 2022, Ottawa Fire Services responded to 23,875 and 28,633 incidents respectively. This represents a difference of 6 per cent in incidents from 2020 to 2021 and 18 per cent from 2021 to 2022. This can be attributed to population growth, intensification, new construction techniques, and the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on medical response requirements.

There was also a continued increase in the severity of the incidents being responded to in both 2021 and 2022. These events included the Merivale Road explosion, the illegal occupation of the City's downtown core and the derecho storm.

In 2021 and 2022 staff demonstrated their ability to adapt to a rapidly changing situation by adjusting roles and responsibilities and operational procedures in order to protect the nation's capital with honour.

BACKGROUND

Ottawa Fire Services takes a proactive approach to protecting the community and recognizes the importance of implementing the three lines of defence in accordance with the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*:

1. Public Fire Safety Education
2. Fire Safety Standards and Enforcement
3. Emergency Response

Description of Ottawa Fire Services

Ottawa Fire Services is the largest composite fire service (combination of career and volunteer resources) in the country and provides an effective modern emergency service to the community. Ottawa Fire Services responds from 45 stations strategically located across the city in order to serve Ottawa's large geographic area.

Ottawa Fire Services 1,461 staff includes firefighters as well as inspection, education, safety, communications, and administrative personnel. Ottawa Fire Services operates from five divisions and the Office of the Fire Chief.

Urban and Special Operations

The Urban Operations division is responsible for fire suppression, fire rescue, tiered medical response, and incident management services in urban areas.

Special Operations is responsible for wildland fires, auto extrication, technical rescues (water/ ice, trench, collapse, confined space, high angle), urban search and rescue, and hazardous materials (HAZMAT) and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive response.

Rural Operations

Rural Operations is responsible for fire suppression, fire rescue, tiered medical response, water and ice rescue, auto extrication, wildland fires, and incident management services, mostly in rural areas.

Community Standards and Communication

Community Standards and Communications is responsible for engaging and educating the public on fire safety. Safety programs, inspections, investigations, and code enforcement are carried out by Fire Prevention. This division also houses the Ottawa Fire Services Communications Centre which provides bilingual dispatch services to the City of Ottawa as well as surrounding areas.

Training and Safety

Training and Safety is responsible for fostering a culture of safety, learning and service excellence for Ottawa Fire Services. The training division is responsible for researching, developing, and delivering the most up to date training for all Ottawa Fire Services staff. The training division also leads the recruitment, hiring and training of new firefighters. The safety division develops, implements, and maintains training programs and goes to emergency scenes to ensure the safety of staff. The maintenance division is responsible for procuring, maintaining, distributing, and lifecycle assets of the service, including critical tools and personal protective equipment such as extrication equipment or bunker gear. Training and Safety is also responsible for air management (self-contained breathing apparatus respirator use) and training.

Operational Support Services

Operational Support Services provides support to core operations, programs and activities including shift scheduling, performance analysis, purchasing and contract administration, management of all facilities, uniforms, Geographic Information Systems, and Fire Data Management support.

Mission, vision, and values

Over the past two years, Ottawa Fire Services has established a revitalized mission, vision, and values statement.

Mission: Ottawa Fire Services protects the lives, property, and environment for the residents of and visitors to the City of Ottawa.

Vision: To progressively advance our emergency responses, training, education, prevention and safety standards to meet the ever-evolving needs of our community.

- To be a caring, healthy, and diverse workplace that is committed to change.
- To be a service that leads with new technology, techniques and equipment.
- To be professional, accountable, customer-centric and safety oriented.

Values: We stand together, work together, and serve together, through teamwork, honour, integrity, commitment, and pride.

Accredited fire service status

Ottawa Fire Services first completed the process to receive accredited agency status with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) in 2014 and was reaccredited in 2019 for a five-year period. The accreditation process required Ottawa Fire Services to complete an in-depth analysis of all its divisions and programs. CFAI accreditation allows Ottawa Fire Services the opportunity to learn alongside the best in the industry and it is a commitment to continuous improvement.

Since being accredited, Ottawa Fire Services has implemented the Commission's accreditation model and recommendations by strengthening its internal culture and labour relations, building positive relationships within the community and by being at the forefront of innovation and improvement.

In 2021 and 2022 Ottawa Fire Services focused on implementing recommendations from the 2019 accreditation process and completing annual compliance reviews including analysis of response times and resource deployment.

Level of service

Municipal fire services are mandated by the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to provide a level of service that is in accordance with local needs and circumstances. Ottawa Fire Services performance standards, known as standards of cover, set out the level of response to each type of call, including how fast and how many resources should respond. The current standards of cover were developed as part of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International accreditation process and approved by City Council in 2015 ([ACS2015-COS-EPS-0021](#)). The standards of cover are based on community risks and analysis of growth, demand for service and incident occurrence trends, as well as industry best practice. Ottawa Fire Services measures both first on scene total response time performance and effective response force total response time performance at the 90th percentile.

First on scene refers to the first apparatus to arrive at the scene of an emergency. Effective response force refers the minimum number of firefighters and equipment that

must reach a specific emergency incident location within a maximum prescribed time. The standards of cover prescribes the effective response force for each incident response type.

This report and Document 1 detail Ottawa Fire Services total response time performance for fire, medical, rescue, and HAZMAT emergencies.

Call volume, incident volume and apparatus response volume

Ottawa Fire Services takes pride in ensuring residents are receiving the best possible emergency response. The service regularly reviews and analyzes recorded data to ensure continuous service delivery to the community. Along with total response time performance at the 90th percentile, the primary measures that determine service demand and associated resource requirements are total number of calls received, total number of incidents, and total number of apparatus responses.

Ottawa Fire Services tracks every request for service using the dispatch system, this is referred to as call volume. Emergency incident response data is categorized based on the information received by the communications division at the time of the initial call. Total call volume is the number of calls received directly by the Ottawa Fire Services Communications Centre or down streamed by the primary 9-1-1 Centre (Ottawa Police). Multiple calls may be received for the same incident.

Incident volume is the recorded total of emergency incidents that require response. An emergency incident is any situation to which the service responds to deliver emergency services including rescue, fire suppression, emergency medical care, or special operations. Some incidents may turn out to be false alarms or situations where assistance is not required.

Apparatus response volume is the total number of apparatuses dispatched to all incidents. The number of apparatuses dispatched to each incident is based on the effective response force. Apparatuses may include pumps, ladders or other vehicles or motorized equipment.

This report and Document 1 detail the results for 2021 and 2022 for call volume, incident volume and apparatus response volume, as well as trends for the last 5 years.

Changing landscape for firefighting

The landscape in which Ottawa Fire Services performs has changed rapidly and, as a result, response to fires must evolve to meet these changes.

Modern building design and construction changes, building materials and finishes, and modern furnishings are all creating hotter fires. There is also greater use of synthetic materials, plastics that contain hydrocarbons which in turn create dense, black, highly toxic smoke. These changes mean that both the time crews must arrive on scene and the time they must fight fires are getting smaller.

Recent dramatic and deadly increases in global wildfire activity have increased attention on the causes of wildfires, their consequences, and how risk from wildfire might be mitigated. This encroachment of human activity into greenspaces increases the number of wildfires due to human ignitions.

In addition, a host of other emergency responses are increasing because of climate change. Ottawa Fire Services is experiencing a significant increase in resource deployment to support power outages, flooding, tornadoes and severe winds, and ice storms.

Ottawa Fire Services will continue to evaluate and plan for these factors when considering future levels of service and investments in new training, vehicles, equipment, and technology.

DISCUSSION

The Ottawa Fire Services 2021 and 2022 Annual Report highlights key accomplishments from those years. 2021 and 2022 presented challenges for Ottawa Fire Services however staff continued to execute plans and projects, maintained service levels, and adapted to the needs of the community. The objectives and accomplishments described in this report demonstrate continued commitment to the safety of property, residents, and visitors to the city of Ottawa.

Performance

Review of recorded data for 2021 and 2022 shows that the number of calls, incidents and apparatus responses are increasing at a significant rate. Despite this, in 2021 and 2022 response time standards were met in all categories.

Call volume

While call volumes tend to fluctuate, over the past two years the Communications Centre call volume has increased. In 2021 the call volume was 92,477 and in 2022 that number jumped to 99,580. Table 1 in Document 1, shows the Ottawa Fire Services Communications Centre's call volume for the past five years. The 2022 call volume is a 6.4 per cent increase over the 5-year average.

These increases are partially a result of pandemic related course correction and behaviors related to COVID-19. Call volume increase is being reported across emergency services. For Ottawa Fire Services there were increases in hazardous material responses (up 52 per cent) mainly related to carbon monoxide calls. Medical responses (up 32 per cent) because of Ottawa Fire Services tiered response. A tiered response refers to the process of a co-ordinated response of the three emergency services to various types of medical emergency incidents that occur within our community. Rescue responses including extrication and water or ice rescue (up 24 per cent). The increase is related to people returning to normal activities resulting in more traffic movement and more outdoor recreation requiring more rescues.

Efficient call volume management enables Ottawa Fire Services to provide effective fire protection and timely emergency responses by reducing the total time from the moment a call for service is received to the moment staff arrive on scene.

Incident volume

In 2021 Ottawa Fire Services responded to 23,875 incidents, an increase of 6.7 per cent from 2020. In 2022 responded to 28,633 incidents, an increase of 19.9 per cent increase.

In 2021 there were 8,956 false fire alarms and in 2022 there were 10,478 false fire alarms, a 17 per cent increase over the previous year. Medical related incidents increased over 30 per cent over the same period and other medical calls increased over 50 per cent.

Table 2 in Document 1 shows the volume for each incident type between 2018 and 2022.

Apparatus response volume

In 2021, Ottawa Fire Services recorded 66,020 apparatus responses which represents an increase of 3.5 per cent from 2020. In 2022, Ottawa Fire Services recorded 74,877 apparatus responses, which represents an increase of 13.4 per cent from 2021.

Table 3 in Document 1 shows the number of apparatus responses from 2018 to 2022.

Response Time Standards

In 2021 and 2022 Ottawa Fire Service met its response time standards in all available categories.

Tables 4 and 5 in Document 1 show the first on scene total response time performance at the 90th percentile for each type of incident between 2018 and 2022.

Tables 6 and 7 in Document 1 show the effective response force total response time performance at the 90th percentile for each type of incident between 2018 and 2022.

There are several factors that may affect response times from year to year, including construction and other road closures, time of year (weather), time of day, traffic flow, traffic intensification and station cover off as resources are directed to an ongoing incident. With ongoing growth in the City, in 2021 and 2022, Ottawa Fire Services experienced difficulty achieving response time performance standards. The Ottawa Fire Service will be required to continue to invest in infrastructure and people to address the ever-increasing response volume due to population growth and development city-wide.

Fire Prevention and Education

Public education, inspection and code enforcement are mitigation strategies that can be used to reduce the volume of fire-related incidents. Recognizing fire prevention as the first line of defense, Ottawa Fire Services provides the following services:

- Public education
- Fire code inspection and enforcement
- Fire investigation

Public education

In 2021 Fire Prevention received 1,804 requests for fire safety information and in 2022 received 1,440 requests. During this period, the Public Education team participated in 554 educational events, most of which were held virtually as Ottawa Fire Service only resumed in-person public events in May 2022.

During 2021, in response to public health restrictions, the team created a virtual social media campaign to replace the door-to-door Wake Up: Get a Working Smoke Alarm program. The virtual campaign encouraged residents to test their smoke and carbon monoxide alarms by posting on social media with a challenge for others to do the same. In 2022, Fire Prevention returned to an in-person campaign and visited over 12,000 homes promoting working smoke alarms.

In a response to increased fires, up 5.9 per cent from 2021 to 2022, the Public Education team refreshed the After the Fire program. The goal of this program is to provide fire safety information to residents shortly after a fire in their local community. Fire Prevention Officers visit homes in the areas of a significant fire to discuss the

importance of working alarms and encourage residents to practice home escape planning.

In 2022 Enbridge Gas donated over 1,000 smoke alarms with carbon monoxide detection to Ottawa Fire Services. Staff have been installing these dual alarms in homes where smoke alarms are needed. These alarms were delivered to homes identified by the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, during Ottawa Fire Service inspections and through the annual door-to-door Wake Up program to ensure that the alarms go to some of the most in need. Enbridge Gas also partnered with Ottawa Fire Services to promote carbon monoxide safety in commercials that ran during the month of December in 2022.

Fire Code inspections and enforcement

Ottawa Fire Services Inspectors are responsible for ensuring that buildings within the city comply with the Ontario Fire Code. Inspections are required for the licensing of some businesses such as public garages, public halls, and restaurants as well as for liquor licences, fire-safety plans, fire routes, and vulnerable occupancies. Inspections may also be initiated by complaint, request, or firefighter-identified fault. Inspectors may also proactively inspect properties for retrofit requirements.

When violations of the Ontario Fire Code are found, inspectors work with the property owner to establish an appropriate timeframe for the property to be made compliant. When requirements are not met within the established timeframe, inspectors can proceed with enforcement.

In 2021 and 2022 fire prevention officers completed over 3253 inspections. Some of these inspections were the mandatory annual inspections of vulnerable occupancies to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities are living in buildings that are safe and free of Fire Code violations. Ottawa Fire Services inspects over 200 vulnerable occupancies annually.

Fire investigations

After any fire causing greater than \$50,000 damage/loss or any fire which results in injury or death an Ottawa Fire Services fire investigator conducts on-site investigations. They are responsible for collecting, analyzing and reporting detailed data regarding a fire. Ottawa Fire Services investigated 218 fires in 2021 and 233 fires in 2022. Investigators look into the source(s) of ignition, growth and development of the fire, and the sequence of events that led to the ignition of the combustible material in order to determine the cause of the fire. The cause of each fire is reported to the Ontario Fire

Marshal's Office, which collects data to gauge how many fires are occurring throughout the province, why these fires are happening, and what can be done to prevent these types of fires in the future. The data also helps the service prioritize areas in the city that may require additional fire prevention and education resources.

Key Responses

Ottawa Fire Services responded to a number of incidents in 2022. Some key responses that demonstrate outstanding operational performance and contribute to public trust in the service are explained below.

Merivale Road Explosion

On January 13, 2022 Ottawa Fire Services and emergency services partners responded to an explosion and fire at an industrial building located at 1995 Merivale Road. The first firefighters to arrive on scene reported the building was fully involved and engulfed in flames and thick black smoke. The HAZMAT team and other Special Operations teams were also engaged. The fire was declared under control almost four and a half hours after the first arriving apparatus, but firefighters remained on scene to search the site and monitor for flareups.

This was a large-scale disaster response requiring multijurisdictional management of the event from Ottawa Fire Services, Ottawa Police Services, Ontario Fire Marshal, Ministry of Labour, Coroner's Office and the Technical Standards and Safety Authority.

Occupation of Downtown Ottawa

In January 2022, hundreds of trucks and vehicles converged in Ottawa's downtown area. The Convoy protest lasted until late February 2022, during which time, Ottawa Fire Services supported the City and Ottawa Police Services' response to mitigate impacts to residents, businesses and essential services. Average response times in the area increased overall as a result of the limited access routes and lane restrictions.

In addition to being prepared to respond to any fire suppression or prevention, Ottawa Fire Services ensured the safe handling of fuel and propane cylinders and responded to open air fires in the red-zone and provided general support the National Capital Commission and Ottawa Police Services for public safety concerns.

Ottawa Fire Services worked in collaboration with partners in the City's Emergency Operations Centre and the National Capital Region Command Center.

Derecho Storm Response

On May 21, 2022, Ottawa was hit by powerful spring storm. More than 1,000 homes and over 180,000 customers were left without power. The storm prompted calls to report downed trees, power lines, property damage, automatic alarms, and bodily injury to which Ottawa Fire Services responded immediately. Firefighters drove and walked streets checking for damage and ensuring residents were safe, assisting with the removal of trees, and delivering water in high rise apartments that were without power and therefore without water. Ottawa Fire Services also responded to numerous calls for carbon monoxide inside homes caused by generators. During the 24-hour period following the Derecho firefighters were called to 696 incident responses.

Impacts of COVID-19

In 2021 and 2022 the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact Ottawa Fire Services due to increased call volume and the need for new protocols and procedures. Ottawa Fire continuously worked to adapt to the changing and evolving nature of the public health emergency. In 2021 and 2022 Ottawa Fire Services continued to experience PPE shortages and staffing shortages requiring mitigation measure to ensure uninterrupted emergency response while maintaining the safety of firefighters and residents.

Ottawa Fire Services staff were trained and practiced the delivery of all services while following strict COVID-19 protocols. The Training Division was able to convert some training, including for new recruits, to be delivered virtually. All in-person training was delivered safely through the use of outdoor spaces, limited group sizes, physical distancing, proper PPE and ongoing sanitization protocols.

The Community Standards and Communications Division continued to provide community engagement using virtual platforms and used social media and other online channels to communicate fire safety messaging. Fire Prevention staff were able to deliver some in-person inspections where threats to immediate life safety made it necessary. They also continued to adapt to virtual inspections where possible to meet the obligations under the Fire Code. Fire Prevention staff modified inspections and processes for vulnerable occupancies in response to tighter community restrictions trying to minimize exposure to the virus and prioritize public safety along with fire education. Fire Prevention also moved service requests and application processes online to limit or eliminate exposure.

Staff in Ottawa Fire Services also directly supported the City's response to the pandemic response including the vaccine rollout. Staff across Ottawa Fire Services assumed acting assignments and additional duties and worked extra shifts in order for staff to be redeployed to work on Ottawa's COVID-19 response and vaccine rollout.

Equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives

Ottawa Fire Services is committed to supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion within the workplace and across Ottawa's many communities and neighbourhoods. Ottawa Fire Service has several programs aimed at ensuring the needs of diverse groups or individuals are considered.

New recruitment and hiring strategy

In 2022 Ottawa Fire Services launched the new recruitment and hiring strategy, aimed at increasing the number of qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds interested in pursuing a career with the service. Ottawa Fire Services continues to monitor the success of this new strategy to ensure recruitment and selection of strong candidates who reflect the diversity of the city

In 2021 and 2022 Ottawa Fire Services hired 48 recruit candidates each year for career firefighter positions to fill vacancies. In 2021 and 2022, the Rural Operations Division hired 110 new rural volunteer firefighters. The percentage of new career recruits for women in 2021 is 10 per cent. In 2022 that number increased to 17 per cent for career firefighters. During this same period, women made up 15 per cent of the rural firefighter recruits. Ottawa Fire Services is making continued efforts to engage women and diverse populations who are considering applying for firefighter positions. Ottawa Fire Services is also committed to increasing racial and gender diversity to improve the service and better address the needs of residents.

Camp FFIT

Camp FFIT presents an opportunity for diverse groups of young women, non-binary, and trans youth from all social backgrounds, ages 15 to 19 years old, to learn what it takes to be a firefighter and experience a potential career path. Since it began, Camp FFIT has hosted more than 270 total participants and some graduates are now finding positions as career firefighters, volunteer firefighters, and other first responders. Many graduates of the program are attending pre-service firefighter education and training programs in post-secondary institutions or applying for full-time positions with Ottawa Fire Services and fire services across the nation.

After a one-year interruption in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Camp FFIT resumed in the summer of 2021. The group size was adjusted to meet physical distancing requirements and follow all COVID-19 protocols and precautions. In 2021 Camp FFIT hosted 12 participants for a shorter camp duration. In 2022 the camp returned to the full complement of 24 participants.

Ottawa Fire Services will continue to host Camp FFIT in the coming years, with a focus on increasing confidence and empowering young participants to pursue a productive and rewarding career in fire services.

Ottawa Fire Services Fire Venturers Program

In 2021 and 2022 Ottawa Fire Services continued their collaboration with Scouts Canada to provide the Ottawa Fire Services Venturers Program to youth between the ages of 14 and 18. The program allows participants to get a sense of the day-to-day of being a firefighter and gain a valuable perspective on firefighting skills and activities. The Fire Venturers Program also helps young people learn about the educational opportunities available for those who are interested in working in fire services.

The Venturers Program launched in 2019 with 12 participants meeting approximately twice a month to learn important firefighter knowledge and participate in hands on learning opportunities alongside Ottawa Fire Services staff. In 2021 and 2022 the program was adapted to meet virtually during peak COVID periods and smaller groups were held in-person at the Training Center when it was safe to conduct outdoor activities. Strict COVID-19 procedures were followed, and this successful program has managed to continue with new participants joining in both years.

Ambassador Program promoting diversity and inclusion

In 2021 and 2022, the Ambassador Program continued to provide a unique opportunity for staff to actively use their personal stories to create influential change in their communities. Ambassadors work toward changing perspectives and breaking down stereotypes to promote Ottawa Fire Services and fire service in general as a desirable career path and place to work. These presentations are available to any community group, association, or informal group.

Building relationships and creating new outreach opportunities with a goal of connecting with underrepresented community groups and youth are an important part of the services' ongoing recruitment strategy. Also included in the strategy is the creation of an Ottawa Fire Services Ambassador Working Group that will connect into the Emergency and Protective Services Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Launched in 2021,

the working group members are also responsible for continuing to grow a diverse and accepting workplace culture within each division of Ottawa Fire Services.

During the past two years the working group has visited 28 schools (including virtual visits following COVID-19 restrictions), participated in 14 school board job fairs, and provided three presentations to other local organizations. In addition, it held two focus group sessions and became members of a national equity, diversity and inclusion group.

Strategic Initiatives

Ottawa Fire Services has also developed four renewed strategic priorities which demonstrate the commitment to continuously improving emergency services for residents, performing effective risk planning and proactive fire protection and prevention:

1. Dedication to continuous improvement
2. Working with our community
3. Supporting our people
4. Critical investments

These four priorities will help Ottawa Fire Services address upcoming challenges and ensure that the projects and programs staff undertake contribute towards the ability to continue to deliver excellent service to residents.

Dedication to continuous improvement initiatives

Some of the key goals under this priority include meeting provincial requirements for firefighter training and certification with a sustainable delivery model. Through this process Ottawa Fire Services will provide certifications for all fire suppression personnel. This includes exterior and interior fire attack, officer training, emergency communications and dispatching as well as the full suite of specialty services provided for hazardous materials, rope rescue, structural collapse, surface water, swift water and ice rescue.

Ottawa Fire Services is also preparing for and starting the reaccreditation process with an international fire accreditation agency. This is a key part of improving the performance in key service areas and making continuous improvement.

Working with our community initiatives

Some of the key goals under this priority include extending partnerships and relationships with community housing groups to provide fire and life safety education with an emphasis on ensuring all residents have working smoke alarms on every story and outside all sleeping areas, a working carbon monoxide alarm, and emphasizing the importance of creating a home fire-escape plan.

Ottawa Fire Services believes in reflecting the community we serve. The entire community benefits when people are included. As the community becomes more and more diverse Ottawa Fire Services continues to increase engagement and strengthen the trust with 2SLGBTQ+ community. Ottawa Fire Services are planning and delivering programs and services to continue to foster these relationships and create more opportunities to connect with other underrepresented community groups.

Supporting our people initiatives

A key goal under this priority is identifying and implementing effective and relevant mental health programs. Although firefighters have been trained to engage in extreme conditions, current training does not comprehensively address or provide resources for the post-response mental health needs. Firefighters are regularly exposed, and often first on scene, to critical incidents and traumatic events that place them at increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), critical incident stress or other mental illnesses. First responders experience PTSD and critical incident stress at a much higher rate than the rest of the population. This leads to increased work absences, burnout, illness, and high turnover rates. Ottawa Fire Services aims to prevent and reduce mental health issues while addressing intrinsic barriers to seeking help such as lack of understanding or stigma.

Mental Health and Peer Support Program

Ottawa Fire Services is committed to the physical and mental health of all staff and as such continues to support the Mental Health Peer Support Program. Trained volunteers from within each division provide their colleagues with confidential, emotional and social support in a safe, non-judgmental. There were approximately 300 requests for assistance each year. Additionally, ongoing training opportunities are provided to all staff to raise awareness and encourage them to reach out for support when required. Ottawa Fire Services also continued to support its mental health peer support team by implementing the Road to Mental Readiness training for staff. This program offers resilience and mental health training from qualified trainers, clinicians and operators to meet the needs of staff and their families.

Critical investment initiatives

Some of the key goals under this priority include an updated station location study, investments for stations 45 and 81, upgrades to the station alerting and paging system, and a new training centre.

Updated station location study

In 2008 Ottawa Fire Services completed its first Station Location study ([ACS2008-CPS-OFS-0001](#)) and in 2015 a second study was approved by Council ([ACS2015-COS-EPS-0021](#)). Since then there has been significant growth in the City of Ottawa, including an 8.8 per cent population increase. Ottawa Fire Services will be bringing forward a new Station Location Study to the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee and City Council with recommendations for required investments in facilities, fleet, and staffing to address growth and development pressures as well as the urban boundary expansion and population projections from the new Official Plan.

Stations 45 and 81

In early 2024 the new Fire Station 45 will become operational. This will improve the first on scene response time and turnout time for an effective response force in the area. Staff will bring forward operating pressures related to the opening of the new station in the 2024 Draft Operating Budget.

Staff have begun planning for the expansion of Station 81 at 1631 Stittsville Main Street which will then become a composite station, adding a career response of 4 personnel to the existing volunteer complement. The capital cost of this project will be funded through development charges and operating pressures will be identified in the 2025 Draft Operating Budget.

Station alerting and paging project

The station alerting and paging project aims to enhance station call-out and paging abilities through the implementation of new technology. The station alerting system is used to notify urban fire stations of an emergency call and the paging system is the primary method used to notify Volunteer Firefighters of calls. In 2021 Ottawa Fire Services issued a request for proposal to replace the outdated paging system. In 2022, Ottawa Fire Services replaced all outdated pager hardware for frontline staff, paging site hardware was commissioned and computer-aided design configuration was completed. System Acceptance Testing and go-live is planned for 2023. The Station Alerting replacement phase of the project is planned to begin in 2024.

New fire training centre project

The current Ottawa Fire Services training centre was built in 1977, to meet the training needs of the former City of Ottawa Fire Service. Given the growth of the city, including amalgamation of none fire services into one, nearby construction and the condemning of the burn building, the facility has reached its capacity for effective training delivery. Ottawa Fire Services has temporarily acquired space for some task and scenario training however it does not provide the required facilities for longer training sessions.

The projected cost for the replacement of the current Fire Training Centre is \$84 million, with \$21 million of the total cost is recoverable from development charges. The remaining \$63 million of the facility funding will need to be provided from grants, subsidies and other recoveries. Ottawa Fire Services has been consulting with potential partners in developing a strategic vision for a shared training facility and continues to work on funding solutions to complete this critical project.

Conclusion

Staff continue to focus on fire prevention, code enforcement and education outreach to reduce the number of fires and ensure residents and property owners are implementing the proper measures to stay safe.

Continued investments in mental health initiatives, including the wellness and fitness program, will ensure that staff are provided the necessary skills and tools to build resilience and be successful.

Overall, Ottawa Fire Services is committed to ensuring the availability of effective, efficient emergency services to the residents of Ottawa, while focusing on continued improvement. Ottawa Fire Services remains a versatile, innovative force and a leader amongst fire services in Canada.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving this report for information.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

There are no comments associated by Ward Councilors associated with this report as this is a city-wide item.

CONSULTATION

There were no consultations undertaken related to the recommendations of this report. Ottawa Fire Services is committed to consulting and collaborating with residents and community partners to ensure the safety of all in Ottawa.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

Ottawa Fire Services serves the needs of the diverse and growing community and follows the City's accessibility legislative framework. This includes adherence to the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, 191/11, meeting the City of Ottawa's Accessibility Policy, and following the City's Accessibility Design Standards to the greatest extent possible.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

Ottawa Fire Services reports annually to the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee on the use of delegated authority, as described in Section 17 of Schedule F of the Delegation of Authority By-law (2023-67). The last reporting was on March 30 via the Use of Delegated Authority in 2022 by Emergency and Protective Services.

There are no new delegated authority requirements associated with this information report.

CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

Forecasting studies led by the City's Climate Resiliency group indicate that Ottawa is expected to become warmer and wetter over the next several decades. This warming due to climate change favors conditions conducive to extreme weather such as storms, tornadoes, and wildfires. This is a key consideration for Ottawa Fire Services for risk planning to ensure the ability to provide seamless service to residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Ottawa Fire Services is committed to the implementation and development of sustainability initiatives with the goal of reducing the overall environmental footprint of their services. In 2021 and 2022, Ottawa Fire Services continued their work with the Corporation on the Climate Change Master Plan initiatives. Ottawa Fire Services is reducing greenhouse gas emissions through greater use of electric battery powered

equipment. Ottawa Fire Services also continues to explore options for electric fire trucks to replace vehicles in the current fleet. New technology offers zero emissions, zero greenhouse gas, and reduced noise.

INDIGENOUS GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

Ottawa Fire Services is committed to the Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Plan. Recognizing that vulnerable populations are disproportionately impacted by emergencies, Ottawa Fire Services incorporates an equity, diversity and inclusion lens into its emergency response and outreach and education work.

Gender and equity programs delivered by Ottawa Fire Services are described in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Risk implications and associated mitigation strategies are identified and explained in this report.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific rural implications associated with receiving this report for information. However, Ottawa Fire Services considers the varying needs of those living in different parts of the city when developing and applying performance standards.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The services provided by the Ottawa Fire Service align with the 2019-2022 Term of Council Priority of Thriving Communities: Promote safety, culture social and physical well-being of our residents.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – 2021 2022 Ottawa Fire Services Annual Report Data

DISPOSITION

Ottawa Fire Services will action any direction received as part of consideration of this report.

Document 1

2021 – 2022 Ottawa Fire Services Annual Report Data