

**Subject: 2024 Ottawa Fire Services Annual Report**

**File Number: ACS2025-EPS-OFS-0002**

**Report to Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee on 17  
April 2025**

**and Council 30 April 2025**

**Submitted on April 8, 2025 by Paul Hutt, Fire Chief, Ottawa Fire Services**

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**Ward: Citywide**

**Objet : Rapport annuel 2024 du Service des incendies d'Ottawa**

**Numéro de dossier : ACS2025-EPS-OFS-0002**

**Rapport présenté au Comité des services de protection et de préparation aux  
situations d'urgence**

**Rapport soumis le 17 avril 2025**

**et au Conseil le 30 avril 2025**

**Soumis le 08 avril 2025 par Paul Hutt, chef du Service des incendies d'Ottawa**

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## **REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee recommend that Council receive the 2024 Ottawa Fire Services Annual Report for information.

## **RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT**

Que le Comité des services de protection et de préparation aux situations d'urgence recommande au Conseil de prendre connaissance de ce rapport annuel 2024.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is a summary of Ottawa Fire Services' activities in 2024, including information about fire protection services, prevention initiatives, performance metrics, ongoing projects, programs, and noteworthy highlights from 2024. The report highlights how Ottawa Fire Services has aligned the service's mission, vision, and values to provide high quality fire programs and services while prioritizing the well-being of staff. This report also fulfills the annual reporting requirement under the Fire Services Establishing and Regulating By-law (No. 2024-279).

Additionally, the Ottawa Fire Services 2024 Annual Report provides information about the successful completion of the 2024-2029 Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) accreditation process, which included a Community Risk Assessment, Standards of Cover, and the Ottawa Fire Services 2025 Station Location Study. These initiatives feature programs designed to mitigate increased demand for service and ensure the service will continue meeting its emergency response standards as the city grows.

The report aligns with the 2023-2026 Term of Council Priority "a city that has affordable housing and is more liveable for all".

## **Assumption and Analysis**

Ottawa Fire Services is responsible for providing 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 to residents and visitors to the City of Ottawa.

In 2024, the Ottawa Fire Services handled 114,851 communications centre calls, up eight per cent from 2023, and made 85,511 apparatus responses. Unfortunately, there were also 12 fire and incident related fatalities during this timeframe. Ottawa Fire Services responded to a higher number of incidents in 2024 compared to previous years, with a total of 34,372 incidents addressed. This represents a four per cent increase from 2023, which is attributable to a variety of factors including population growth, urban intensification, materials used in new construction creating hotter and faster spreading fires, and the ongoing demand for medical response services.

In 2024, the Ottawa Fire Services continued to successfully meet the council-approved response times, ensuring timely and efficient emergency responses.

Staff continued to demonstrate dedication and adaptability while maintaining the safety and protection of the nation's capital, showcasing their honour and professionalism in every aspect of their work.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications to receiving this report for information.

### **Public Consultation/Input**

Ottawa Fire Services did not conduct any public consultation or seek input during the development of the 2024 Annual Report.

Ottawa Fire Services maintains a comprehensive public education program designed to educate and inform residents effectively about fire safety, awareness, and prevention.

### **RÉSUMÉ**

Le présent rapport résume les activités du Service des incendies d'Ottawa (SIO) en 2024, notamment les services de protection contre les incendies, les initiatives de prévention, les mesures de rendement, les projets en cours, les programmes et les faits notables de l'année. Il explique comment le SIO a harmonisé sa mission, sa vision et ses valeurs pour fournir des programmes et services de haute qualité tout en priorisant le bien-être du personnel. Il satisfait aussi aux exigences de production de rapports annuels prévues dans le *Règlement établissant et régissant le Service des incendies d'Ottawa* (n° 2024-279).

Il est aussi question de la réussite du processus d'agrément 2024-2029 de la Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI), pour lequel a été produit un rapport « Schéma de couverture de risques – Évaluation des risques locaux », et de l'étude sur l'emplacement des casernes de pompiers 2025 du SIO. Ces initiatives s'accompagnent de programmes servant à réduire la demande croissante de services et à permettre au SIO de continuer à respecter les normes d'intervention d'urgence à mesure que la ville prend de l'expansion.

Le rapport cadre avec la priorité pour le mandat du Conseil 2023-2026 « une ville avec des logements abordables qui est plus vivable pour tous ».

## **Hypothèses et analyse**

Le SIO s'occupe de la sensibilisation du public à la prévention des incendies, de l'application des normes de sécurité-incendie et de l'exécution, et des interventions d'urgence lors de l'extinction des incendies, des appels d'urgence médicale, des opérations de sauvetage et d'autres opérations spéciales nécessaires pour les résidentes et résidents et les visiteuses et visiteurs d'Ottawa.

En 2024, il a traité 114 851 appels au Centre des communications, ce qui représente une hausse de 8 pour cent par rapport à 2023, et a réalisé 85 511 interventions avec engins d'incendie. Malheureusement, 12 décès attribuables à des incendies et à des incidents sont à déplorer. Le SIO est intervenu plus souvent en 2024 que dans les années précédentes, soit 34 372 fois au total. Il s'agit d'une augmentation de quatre pour cent par rapport à 2023 s'expliquant par différents facteurs, notamment la croissance démographique, la densification urbaine, les matériaux utilisés dans les nouvelles constructions, qui produisent des feux plus chauds et se propagent plus rapidement, et la demande continue en services d'intervention médicale.

Cette année encore, le SIO a respecté les délais d'intervention approuvés par le Conseil pour garantir des interventions d'urgence rapides et efficaces.

Le personnel est resté dévoué et flexible dans ses efforts pour assurer la sécurité et la protection de la capitale nationale, chaque aspect de son travail étant marqué par son sens de l'honneur et son professionnalisme.

## **Répercussions financières**

Il n'y a pas de répercussions financières associées à la réception du présent rapport à titre informatif.

## **Consultation et commentaires du public**

Le SIO n'a pas mené de consultation publique ni recueilli de commentaires durant la préparation de son rapport annuel 2024.

Il conserve un programme de sensibilisation exhaustif pour conscientiser et renseigner la population sur la sécurité-incendie et de la prévention.

## **BACKGROUND**

Ottawa Fire Services protects the lives, property, and environment for the residents and visitors to the City of Ottawa. Ottawa Fire Services provides services from 45 stations

located across the city. Collectively, these stations provide service to over one million residents across 2,796 square kilometers.

Ottawa Fire Services takes a proactive approach to protecting the community by implementing the three lines of defense as outlined in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. These three lines of defense, identified below, are crucial for ensuring comprehensive fire safety and protection for residents and visitors.

1. **Public Fire Safety Education** - Ottawa Fire Services places a strong emphasis on educating the public about fire safety. A comprehensive public education program includes interactive presentations for various age groups, school programs, community outreach initiatives, and participation in public events. These efforts aim to raise awareness about fire prevention, proper evacuation procedures, and the importance of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. By equipping residents with the knowledge and skills needed to prevent fires and respond effectively in emergencies, Ottawa Fire Services helps to create a safer community.
2. **Fire Safety Standards and Enforcement** - Ensuring compliance with fire safety standards is a key component of Ottawa Fire Services' strategy. Ottawa Fire conducts regular inspections of both commercial and residential buildings to enforce the Fire Code and related safety standards. This includes inspections for business licenses, multi-unit residential buildings, and vulnerable occupancies such as retirement homes and hospitals. By maintaining strict enforcement of fire safety regulations, Ottawa Fire Services helps to minimize fire risks and ensure that buildings are safe for occupants.
3. **Emergency Response** - Ottawa Fire Services provides prompt and effective emergency response to a wide range of incidents, including fire suppression, medical emergencies, rescue operations, and other special operations. Highly trained firefighters are equipped with the necessary skills and equipment to handle emergencies efficiently. By continuously advancing their training, education, and operational procedures, Ottawa Fire Services ensures that they are prepared to meet the evolving needs of the community and protect lives, property, and the environment.

Through these three lines of defense, Ottawa Fire Services demonstrates their commitment to safeguarding the community and maintaining a high standard of fire safety and protection.

## **Fire Service Delivery Model**

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

Ottawa Fire Services nearly 1,500 staff include firefighters as well as inspection, education, safety, training, communications, maintenance and administrative personnel organized into five divisions and the Office of the Fire Chief.

### **Operations (Urban, Rural and Special Operations)**

The Operations division is responsible for providing comprehensive emergency response services across the city. This division handles fire suppression, technical rescue operations, hazardous materials response, and first responder emergency medical assistance through the tiered medical response agreement. Through a combination of urban, rural, and composite stations, the Operations division is responsible for fire suppression, fire rescue, tiered medical response, water and ice rescue, auto extrication, wildland fires, and incident management services, ensuring rapid and effective response to emergencies. The division is staffed by highly trained career and volunteer firefighters who are dedicated to protecting the community and maintaining the highest standards of safety and professionalism.

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 and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive response.

### **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 24/7, 365-day bilingual dispatch services to the City of Ottawa as well as surrounding areas.

### **Training and Safety**

The Training Division delivers in-house training to personnel across all divisions within Ottawa Fire Services. As a provincially recognized training provider under the Office of

the Ontario Fire Marshal's Academic Standards and Evaluations branch, the Training Division offers courses and accreditation for relevant National Fire Prevention Association standards using in-house instructors. In 2023, the Training Division expanded its service offerings to provide training and certification to response partners within the City of Ottawa and Eastern Ontario establishing itself as a centre of expertise and creating new revenue opportunities.

The Safety Division is responsible for fostering a culture of safety, learning, and service excellence within Ottawa Fire Services. It conducts research, develops up-to-date training, and ensures the safety of staff during emergency scenes. The Safety Division also manages critical assets, including personal protective equipment, and oversees air management training (self-contained breathing apparatus respirator use).

### Capital Assets

Created in 2024 to help Ottawa Fire Services operate more efficiently, the Capital Assets division is responsible for managing and maintaining firefighting equipment, vehicles, and infrastructure required for effective emergency response. This includes the procurement, maintenance, and replacement of assets such as fire trucks, firefighting gear, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through greater use of electric battery powered station equipment.

The division ensures that all equipment and infrastructure meet the necessary safety and operational standards, enabling Ottawa Fire Services to respond efficiently to emergencies and maintain high levels of service for the community. Regular assessments and updates are conducted by this division to keep up with technological advancements and the growing needs of the city.

### Operational Support Services

Operational Support Services is responsible for planning and managing programs and services that support all Ottawa Fire Services. The team manages several IT systems that support scheduling and provides records management in accordance with policies, procedures, collective agreements, provincial reporting requirements, and legislation.

Budget management and forecasting are critical focuses for Operational Support Services. They ensure that all programs and services are planned and executed within allocated budgets, while optimizing resources to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, they provide contract administration for key programs and serve as the centre of expertise for a variety of data sources, including geospatial data.

The group also completes all employee transactions related to human resources and payroll and act as the lead for the Accreditation program on behalf of the service.

### **Mission, Vision, and Values**

Ottawa Fire Services is guided by a mission, vision, and values that define its commitment to the safety and well-being of the residents and visitors of Ottawa. These guiding principles, built in consultation with staff, ensure the highest standards of service delivery, professionalism, and community engagement. They form the foundation for our service, guiding the strategic plan and demonstrating our planning cycle.

**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:** Ottawa Fire Services values are standing together, working together, serving together, as reflected by teamwork, honour, integrity, commitment, and pride.

**Motto:** Protecting our nation's capital with honour.

### **Call volume, incident volume, and apparatus volume**

Ottawa Fire Services is dedicated to providing the highest standards of emergency response services to residents and visitors to the City of Ottawa. To ensure continuous improvement, Ottawa Fire Services continually reviews and analyzes performance data. Key metrics include response times, the total number of incidents, the total number of apparatus responses, and the total number of calls received.

Ottawa Fire Services tracks every service request through its dispatch system, referred to as call volume. This includes all calls received directly by the Ottawa Fire Services Communications Centre or relayed by the primary 9-1-1 Centre (Ottawa Police). It is important to note that multiple calls can be received for the same incident.

Incident volume metrics represent the total number of emergency incidents requiring a response. Emergency incidents encompass a range of situations, including rescues, fire



suppression, emergency medical care, and special operations. Some incidents may be false alarms or situations where assistance is ultimately not needed.

Apparatus response volume measures the total number of apparatuses dispatched to incidents. The number of apparatuses sent is based on the required effective response force for a given incident and can include pumps, ladders, and other vehicles or equipment.

Document 1 provides a comprehensive analysis of the 2024 performance metrics for Ottawa Fire Services. It includes detailed results on call volume, incident volume, and apparatus response volume. Additionally, this report highlights trends observed over the past five years, offering valuable insights into service demand patterns, resource allocation, and efficiency improvements.

By examining trends in this manner, Ottawa Fire Services can better understand the evolving needs of the community and strategically plan for future enhancements in emergency response and service delivery. An example of this was that in 2024, OFS moved apparatus to different stations to improve response times, demonstrating a proactive approach to optimizing resources and ensuring timely assistance for residents.

### **Accreditation achievement granted from 2024 to 2029**

The Commission on Fire Accreditation International accreditation is a prestigious recognition awarded to fire and emergency service agencies that demonstrate excellence in various aspects of their operations. To achieve accreditation, a fire service must undergo a rigorous process that includes a self-assessment, peer review (including an onsite assessment), and participation in a public hearing.

Accredited agencies are recognized as being community-oriented, data-driven, and outcome-focused. Feedback from the peer review assessors confirmed that Ottawa Fire Services demonstrated strategic-minded and well-organized operations, ensuring they are properly equipped, staffed, and trained. The Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover, the Self-Assessment Manual, and the Ottawa Fire Services Strategic Plan (2024-2026) comprise the three main components required for accreditation.

The CFAI findings and outcomes highlighted that Ottawa Fire Services met internal targets for fire response times, effectively addressing growth, intensification, population density, and community needs. These findings underscore the service's commitment to

adapting to the evolving demands of the community and maintaining high standards of service delivery. By strategically planning and optimizing resources, Ottawa Fire Services ensures that it can meet the needs of a growing and diverse population.

The accreditation is valid for five years, from 2024 through to 2029, after which the agency must undergo re-evaluation to maintain its status. Additionally, the agency is required to submit annual accreditation reports to ensure ongoing compliance and continuous improvement between full accreditation cycles.

Ottawa Fire Services has established performance objectives based on a review of international standards, industry best practices, current capabilities, and available resources. Internal targets for improved performance have been set for each type of emergency service. As part of the accreditation process community risks were identified and used to determine the appropriate initial and effective responses to the emergency incident.

## **DISCUSSION**

Ottawa Fire Services is continuously working to meet and exceed industry standards, ensuring the safety and well-being of the community it serves and all residents and visitors. The composite model, employing both career and volunteer firefighters, translates to a collaborative and community-focused approach. The challenges posed by the unique geography of Ottawa demonstrate the service's adaptability and commitment to delivering effective service.

Ottawa Fire Services has established performance indicators based on a review of international standards, industry best practices, current capabilities, and available resources. Internal targets for improved performance have been set for each type of emergency service provided by the agency.

The objectives and accomplishments in 2024 described in this report demonstrate Ottawa Fire Services' ongoing dedication to service excellence.

## **Performance**

Analysis of recorded data for 2024 indicates a notable increase in the number of calls, incidents, and apparatus responses. However, despite this surge in activity, response time standards were successfully met across all categories, reflecting the agency's efficiency and resilience.

## **Incident volume**

In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services recorded 85,351 vehicle responses to 34,372 incidents, representing an 8 percent increase in incident responses from 2023. This rise can be related to population growth, ongoing development, and extreme weather events.

As the population increases, the likelihood of fire incidents also rises. More people mean more homes, businesses, and infrastructure susceptible to fires and emergencies. Additionally, with ongoing development and expansion, there is an increase in the number of buildings, residential areas, and commercial establishments. This growth has led to more fire related incidents, medical calls, and emergency incidents due to factors such as construction-related hazards.

Furthermore, extreme weather events and climate change have resulted in more frequent and severe weather occurrences, such as storms, floods, and wildfires. These events can lead to a higher number of emergencies, including structural fires, wildland brush and grass fires, and incidents related to storm damage.

Document 1, Table 1 Incident Volume from 2020 to 2024, shows the volume of incidents that Ottawa Fire Services responded to from 2020 through 2024 by incident type, while Table 2 Apparatus Responses from 2020 to 2024, details the number of apparatus responses for the same period. Several factors can affect response times from year to year, including construction zones, weather conditions, time of day, traffic patterns, traffic intensification, and station cover-offs as resources are directed to ongoing incidents.

## **Call volume**

Call volumes to the Ottawa Fire Services Communications Centre have increased over the past year. In 2024, the number of calls rose to 114,851 from 106,772 in the previous year. The 2024 call volume represents an eight per cent increase over the previous year. Table 7 in Document 1 illustrates the Communications Centre call volume for the past five years.

This rise in call volume is being observed across all emergency services. For Ottawa Fire Services, there was an eighteen per cent increase in medical calls under the tiered response agreement. A tiered response involves the coordinated efforts of the three emergency services to various types of medical emergencies.

False alarm calls saw a reduction in 2024, down moderately by one per cent compared to the previous year. This decrease is largely attributed to the False Fire Alarm Strategy

that went into effect on July 1, 2024. The program is anticipated to result in fewer nuisance false fire alarms over the next few years. The initial steps involve communications and education of building owners and managers.

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

### **Apparatus response volume**

In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services recorded 85,351 apparatus responses, which is nearly the same as the 85,861 responses in 2023. The variation in apparatus responses year over year can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, there was a steady demand for emergency services, leading to relatively stable response numbers. Additionally, effective fire prevention and public safety programs also helped maintain a constant rate of incidents, reducing fluctuations in emergency calls. Operational efficiency improvements in response protocols also contribute to consistent apparatus usage, optimizing resource responses even with incident volume increases. Strategic resource allocation ensures apparatus responses are well-managed, keeping response rates stable despite variations in incident types ranging from fire responses, motor vehicle collisions and medical emergencies.

Table 2 in Document 1 shows the number of apparatus responses from 2020 to 2024.

### **Response Time Standards**

In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services met its response time standards. Ottawa Fire Services bases the response standard on moderate risk which represents 93 per cent of total calls. The service has adopted baseline data to establish performance targets as part of a continuous improvement process. Tables 3 and 4 in Document 1 present the first-on-scene total response time performance at the 90th percentile for each incident type from 2020 to 2024. Tables 5 and 6 illustrate the effective response force total response time performance at the 90th percentile over the same period.

As Ottawa continues to grow, the demand for emergency services increases. New residential and commercial developments require appropriate fire station coverage to ensure timely responses. The total volume of emergency calls has a direct impact on response times, and as the population grows, incident volumes are expected to rise. Increasing urbanization and more complex infrastructure further contribute to higher service demands on Ottawa Fire Services.

Ongoing construction and road closures also affect response capabilities. Detours and restricted routes can delay response vehicles, requiring Ottawa Fire Services to continually adjust to changing traffic patterns. Response times are additionally influenced by time of day, with peak traffic congestion during rush hours and potential visibility and staffing challenges during nighttime hours.

Severe weather events, including heavy snowfall, ice storms, and flooding, present further risks to timely response. Hazardous road conditions, reduced visibility, and other environmental factors necessitate additional caution. Moreover, urban traffic congestion associated with population growth and increased density contributes to longer travel times, highlighting the need for efficient routing and real-time traffic updates.

Ottawa Fire Services continues to adapt to a dynamic and evolving service landscape. By recognizing these factors and implementing strategic planning measures, Ottawa Fire Services remains committed to delivering effective and timely emergency response as Ottawa grows and develops.

## **Divisional Updates**

### **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging in Recruitment and Hiring**

Ottawa Fire Services continued its new recruitment and hiring strategy in 2024, focusing on attracting qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds. This initiative aims to enhance the diversity of the fire services workforce, reflecting the varied demographics of the city. Ottawa Fire Services actively monitors the effectiveness of this strategy to ensure the recruitment of strong candidates who embody the organization's values of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

As part of the application process, candidates complete the City's "Count Me In!" questionnaire, which gathers demographic data and feedback to better understand and address equity, diversity, and inclusion matters. This data helps Ottawa Fire Services assess inclusivity within the service and identify areas for improvement.

In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services hired 34 career firefighter recruits and 56 rural volunteer firefighters. Notably, ten per cent of new recruits were women, and seventeen per cent identified as representing equity groups, showcasing efforts to engage and welcome diverse talent.

Ottawa Fire Services remains committed to engaging women and individuals from diverse populations in firefighter positions. Increasing racial and gender diversity within its ranks enriches the service and by fostering an inclusive environment, Ottawa Fire

Services aims to attract and retain top talent from all backgrounds, ensuring a strong and representative firefighting force dedicated to serving the community with excellence.

#### Ambassador Program - Promoting greater diversity

The Ottawa Fire Services Ambassador Program is a strategic initiative that engages staff members to create positive change in their communities. Established in 2021, the Ambassador Working Group plays a pivotal role in promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion within the fire service. Members also collaborate with the Emergency and Protective Services Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and belonging working group to foster an accepting workplace culture across all divisions of Ottawa Fire Services.

Ambassadors use their personal stories to challenge perceptions and break down stereotypes associated with firefighting. By sharing their journeys, challenges, and triumphs, they aim to inspire others and showcase firefighting as a desirable career path and a rewarding place to work.

In 2024, ambassadors attended twelve events, providing opportunities for staff to engage in equity-building for the fire service. Ottawa Fire Services Ambassadors offer presentations to various community groups, associations, and informal gatherings. Their goal is to engage with diverse audiences and provide insights into the fire service profession. These presentations cover topics such as firefighting skills, career pathways, and the positive impact firefighters have on their communities. Ambassadors actively address misconceptions and encourage individuals from all backgrounds to consider firefighting as a viable career choice.

Ambassadors visited schools to engage with students, share their experiences, and inspire the next generation of firefighters. They also participated in school board job fairs, providing information about firefighting careers and addressing questions from interested students. The program delivers presentations to local organizations, emphasizing the importance of diversity in fire services. The Ambassador Program's working group also became members of a national equity, diversity, and inclusion group, contributing to broader discussions and initiatives and with the goal of generating better outcomes for Ottawa Fire Services.

Building relationships and creating new outreach opportunities are integral to Ottawa Fire Services' recruitment strategy. Ambassadors focus on connecting with underrepresented community groups and youth. By actively engaging with these

communities, the program aims to foster interest, dispel myths, and encourage diverse individuals to explore firefighting as a potential career.

The Ottawa Fire Services Ambassador Program actively promotes diversity, challenges stereotypes, and fosters an inclusive environment. By sharing their stories and engaging with various communities, these ambassadors play a vital role in shaping the future of firefighting in Ottawa.

### Camp FFIT – Empowering youth in firefighting

Ottawa Fire Services Camp FFIT is a first of its kind initiative that has transformed the landscape of firefighting by empowering young women to pursue careers in a traditionally male-dominated field. Since its inaugural camp in 2010, Camp FFIT has embarked on a groundbreaking journey to inspire and empower young women in firefighting roles. This historic event laid the foundation for Camp FFIT and played a pivotal role in establishing Fire Service Women Ontario, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing gender equity in firefighting professions.

Camp FFIT gained significant recognition within the firefighting community and beyond, becoming the first young women's fire camp in Canada. It set a historic precedent for inclusivity and empowerment in a male-dominated industry. The camp's commitment to equity and diversity was further acknowledged through nominations for the City Manager's Award of Distinctions' Equity and Diversity Award, highlighting its role as a beacon of positive change.

Over the past 16 years, Camp FFIT has continued to empower and inspire future leaders in firefighting. With 324 campers having participated in the program and 24 young women joining each summer, Camp FFIT's impact on the next generation of firefighting leaders is undeniable. The camp's commitment to inclusivity is reflected in its decision to remove the initial participation fee, ensuring that financial barriers do not hinder aspiring young women from accessing this transformative experience.

Nine past participants have been hired by Ottawa Fire Services as full-time firefighters, six others as rural firefighters, and twelve have been hired by other fire services across the country. Over fifty past participants are working as volunteer firefighters in their communities and four others have become military firefighters. Many more are working as wildland forestry firefighters and at least one quarter of all attendees have gone on to complete a pre-service firefighter education and training program.

Camp FFIT's enduring legacy as an agent of change and empowerment is exemplified by the recognition it has received, including being presented with the Mayor's Agent of Change Coin. Camp FFIT symbolizes the Ottawa Fire Services' dedication to empowering young women, breaking barriers, and fostering equity, diversity and inclusion in firefighting and emergency services.

#### Ottawa Fire Services Fire Venturers program

The Ottawa Fire Services Venturers Program, in collaboration with Scouts Canada, offers youth aged 14 to 18 a unique opportunity to learn about firefighting. Participants engage in hands-on activities, workshops, and interactions with Ottawa Fire Services staff, gaining practical knowledge about firefighting techniques, equipment, and emergency response protocols.

Launched in 2019 with twelve participants, the program meets twice a month for practical exercises and learning from experienced firefighters. It emphasizes teamwork, leadership, and community service, essential qualities for aspiring firefighters.

In 2024, the program enhanced its focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion, reaching out to youth from various backgrounds and providing cultural competency training to staff. Activities celebrate diversity and promote understanding, creating an inclusive environment. By embracing diversity and adapting to changing needs, the Ottawa Fire Services Venturers Program inspires the next generation of firefighters and fosters a stronger, more compassionate community.

The Venturers Program also highlights educational pathways to careers in fire services, encouraging participants to consider firefighting as a profession and providing guidance on necessary educational steps.

### **Strategic Planning and Efficiencies**

#### False Fire Alarms

The Ottawa Fire Services launched the False Fire Alarm Strategy on July 1, 2024, with the primary goal of reducing nuisance alarms caused by improper maintenance and failure to notify the Ottawa Fire Services Communication Centre in advance of life safety equipment maintenance, building maintenance, and fire drills. This initiative aims to enhance public safety, optimize resource allocation, and minimize unnecessary disruptions.



The strategy, approved by Council as outlined in the report on the Enhanced False Fire Alarm Strategy ([ACS2024-EPS-OFS-0001](#)), focuses on reducing alarms triggered by maintenance issues and lack of communication during planned site work. By addressing these concerns, Ottawa Fire Services aims to ensure resources are available for genuine emergencies, thereby enhancing public safety. Additionally, minimizing false alarms helps improve response times to actual emergencies by allowing for more efficient use of personnel and equipment.

Over the first six months of the program, fire prevention staff have placed a strong emphasis on educating and engaging property owners and managers about proper alarm maintenance and the importance of notifying the communication centre in advance of planned work and drills. Since the program's launch, there has been a slight decrease in the number of false alarms. In 2024, the number of false alarms dropped to 11,827, representing a modest decrease of one per cent from 2023, just six months after the program's inception. This reduction is particularly significant considering the increase in overall call volume over the same period, demonstrating the program's effectiveness even in the face of higher demand.

The strategy also includes a fee structure for false alarms, which is intended to support the program on a cost-recovery basis. These fees are not meant to generate revenue but to encourage property owners to properly maintain their alarm systems and notify the communications centre in advance of planned work and drills. Proper maintenance of alarm systems not only ensures fire service personnel remain available for genuine emergencies but also helps keep occupants safe by ensuring life safety devices function properly when needed. Additionally, this approach ensures resources are efficiently allocated to protect public safety.

Ottawa Fire Services has collected sufficient fees for nuisance false fire alarms to cover the cost of the full-time equivalents required to administer the program. The fee structure is as follows: there is no fee for the first false alarm, a \$500 fee for the second false alarm, a \$1,000 fee for the third false alarm, and a \$1,500 fee for the fourth and subsequent false alarms within a 12-month period. Ottawa Fire Services anticipates a further reduction in false alarms calls in 2025.

### Inventory Management System

In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services began the development of a new inventory management system, PSTrax (Public Safety Tracking Systems), aimed at enhancing operational efficiency by better forecasting needs, managing inventory, and ensuring the availability

of critical firefighting equipment and supplies. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to strengthen the use technology to drive efficiency.

The PSTrax system leverages advanced technology to provide real-time tracking and management of inventory across all fire stations, and all vehicles. By integrating with existing operational systems, it allows for seamless monitoring of equipment usage, maintenance schedules, and stock levels. This integration ensures that firefighters have immediate access to the tools they need, reducing manual processes, and providing better reporting to avoid duplication.

Significant progress was made in the implementation of the system in 2024. Initial phases included a comprehensive audit of current inventory practices and the identification of key areas for improvement. Training sessions were conducted for staff to familiarize them with the new system's features and functionalities, and testing continues. Feedback from these sessions continues to be instrumental in refining the system to better meet the needs of users.

The PSTrax inventory management system is expected to be operational by mid-2025. As Ottawa Fire Services continues to roll out this system, it anticipates further improvements in inventory accuracy, cost savings through better resource management, and enhanced overall efficiency.

### Employee Status for Rural Firefighters

In February 2024, the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee and Council reviewed and approved a report on the employee status of rural firefighters in Ottawa. The Employee Status of Rural Firefighters report ([ACS2024-EPS-OFS-0002](#)) recommended converting rural firefighters to casual employees with the City of Ottawa. This important change recognizes the vital role rural firefighters play in providing emergency response, public education, and community safety from twenty rural fire stations across the city.

The reclassification aligns with industry standards and this change is expected to improve retention rates and job satisfaction and by providing rural firefighters with benefits, vacation pay, and pension plan options.

## **Key Responses**

In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services responded to a diverse array of incidents such as:

### **Fire Suppression on Donald Street**

In May 2024, a fire broke out on the third floor of a high-rise apartment building on Donald Street in Overbrook around 6 a.m. It required additional resources for the response and took crews an hour to control and over four hours to extinguish. The incident resulted in a fatality, injuries, and displaced dozens of residents, with over 200 seeking assistance at the Overbrook Community Centre. This tragic event highlights the critical role of Ottawa Fire Services in managing emergencies and the importance of community support. Ottawa Fire Services personnel and partners demonstrated exceptional coordination, providing immediate medical care and support to those affected. The Office of Emergency Management provided collaborative support and assistance during the call, ensuring a comprehensive response to the incident.

### **Hazardous Materials Incidents**

In April 2024, Ottawa Fire Services responded to a chemical incident at a hotel in Orléans. Hotel staff reported a strong chemical smell in the pool area. Upon arrival, firefighters learned that 10 children who had been in the pool were complaining of coughing and burning eyes. HazMat personnel found normal chlorine levels in the pool but elevated levels in the hot tub. The hot tub's chlorinator was shut down for inspection, and the pool area was closed for the night. This incident underscores Ottawa Fire Services' expertise in handling hazardous materials and their commitment to public safety.

### **Heavy Rescue Operations**

In May 2024, Ottawa Fire Services responded to a multi-vehicle collision on Highway 417 near the Carp Road exit just before 4:00 p.m. during rush hour. The incident involved three vehicles, one of which caught on fire. The special operations unit extricated one person and worked with paramedics to provide immediate medical care. The collision resulted in multiple injuries, with one person airlifted to hospital. The coordinated response by Ottawa Fire Services, Ottawa Paramedic Service, and Ontario Provincial Police ensured prompt and effective care for all injured parties. This incident highlights Ottawa Fire Services' crucial role in managing emergencies and their dedication to public safety.

## Wildland Fire Prevention and Extreme Weather Responses

FireSmart is a national program addressing wildfire concerns, particularly in the wildland urban interface where forested areas intersect with residential neighbourhoods. The program provides practical tools for reducing wildfire risk. In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services partnered with the Ministry of Natural Resources, the National Capital Commission, and Councillor's with urban wildland intersects within their wards to deliver the FireSmart Program in key locations around the city. By focusing on planning and risk management, Ottawa Fire Services empowers communities and homeowners to take steps for wildfire prevention and safety.

### Technical Rescue by Provincial Specialty Team

On July 15, 2024, Ottawa Fire Services specialty team responded to a silo rescue in Newington, in the Township of South Stormont, as part of the provincial response initiative. The rescue operation involved Ottawa specialty rescue teams ensuring sufficient expertise to mitigate risks such as entrapment, high-angle rescue, confined space, and the use of heavy rescue tools to drain the silo in a controlled manner.

Upon arrival, local firefighters had accessed the patient, a male trapped in a 30-foot tall corn silo up to his waist. Ottawa Fire Services personnel coordinated with South Stormont Fire and Rescue and Russell Township Fire Services to execute the rescue. The operation involved air monitoring, rigging an aerial apparatus as a high point anchor, and using a vacuum truck to expedite corn removal around the patient. The collaborative teamwork of multiple fire services along with the Ottawa Fire Services Provincial Specialty Rescue team were crucial during the call, ensuring a life-saving response to the incident.

## Community Engagement and Fire Prevention

In addition to emergency responses, Ottawa Fire Services continued its efforts in community engagement and fire prevention. Our educational outreach programs, fire safety inspections, and public awareness campaigns are delivered to the community by the Prevention Division. The division actively collaborates with local schools, businesses, and community organizations to promote fire safety and preparedness. The team regularly hosts workshops, training sessions, and interactive events to ensure that residents are well-informed and equipped to handle fire-related emergencies.

The "After the Fire" program was refreshed to provide timely fire safety information to residents shortly after significant fires occur in their local communities. Fire Prevention

Officers visited affected homes, discussed the significance of working alarms, and encouraged residents to practice home escape planning, and answered any questions residents may have. The total number of visits for this program in 2024 exceeded 500.

In addition, through its annual door-to-door Wake Up! program, Ottawa Fire Services conducted over 14,000 visits where smoke alarms with carbon monoxide detection are distributed and installed by Ottawa Fire Services where needed. These alarms are also delivered to homes identified by the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, during Ottawa Fire Services inspections to ensure they reach those most in need.

A key component of Fire Prevention is Fire code inspections to ensure that buildings within the city comply with the Ontario Fire Code. Inspections can be initiated based on complaints, requests, firefighter identified issues or the requirement to inspect under the business licensing by-law. Inspections are an avenue to promote and educate the owners on the requirements of the Ontario Fire Code. For any deficiencies that are observed during an inspection, Inspection Orders are issued, and Officers work with owners to achieve compliance within a specific time frame. If deficiencies are not corrected, Officers have an opportunity to proceed to provincial prosecutions.

When violations of the Ontario Fire Code are found, inspectors work with property owners to establish appropriate timeframes for compliance. If requirements are not met within the specified period, enforcement actions are taken. In 2024, Fire Prevention Officers completed over 2,000 inspections. These included mandatory annual inspections and fire drills in buildings with vulnerable occupants such as care facilities, retirement homes, and treatment centers. These are facilities where residents receive special care, due to limitations that may make them unable to evacuate without assistance, where Ottawa Fire Services ensures that they are safe and free of Fire Code violations. Ottawa Fire Services conducts inspections for over 180 vulnerable occupancies of this kind annually.

Fire Investigations are triggered after any fire causing damage or loss exceeding \$80,000 or resulting in injury or death. Ottawa Fire Services Fire Investigators conduct on-site investigations to collect, analyze, and report detailed data related to the fire incident. The focus includes determining the source of ignition, understanding fire growth and development, and identifying the sequence of events leading to the ignition of combustible materials. The cause of each fire is reported to the Ontario Fire Marshal's office. Ottawa Fire Services investigated over 300 fires in 2024. The leading causes of preventable fires in Ottawa are cooking and improper disposal of smoking

materials. These highlight the importance of fire safety awareness and prevention measures to reduce the risk of fires in the community.

### Hydro Ottawa Partnership

In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services and Hydro Ottawa embarked on an innovative partnership aimed at enhancing the safety and proficiency of firefighters in responding to incidents involving electricity infrastructure. Recognizing the critical need for specialized training the collaboration with Hydro Ottawa led to the development of a comprehensive hydro pole training program. This initiative provides firefighters with hands-on experience in navigating challenging scenarios involving power lines, elevated structures, and the use of aerial trucks during emergencies.

The training program has been instrumental in addressing the unique challenges faced by firefighters. By installing hydro poles equipped with power lines and a transformer, the shared program has created a controlled environment that simulates real-world scenarios without the risk of live electricity.

This partnership has not only improved the technical skills of firefighters but also strengthened the collaborative efforts between Ottawa Fire Services and Hydro Ottawa ensuring the safety and efficiency of interdisciplinary response teams.

### Critical Investment Strategies

In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services made several critical investments to enhance its capabilities and service delivery. The construction of the new Fire Station 45 in Kanata North will better serve the rapidly growing suburban community, improving response times and public safety. Renovations at Fire Station 81 are underway to modernize the facility and ensure it meets current operational needs. Additionally, the updated Station Location Study was completed to provide strategic insights for optimal fire station placement for the next ten years, ensuring comprehensive coverage across the city. The Training Centre project is another key investment, focusing on advanced training programs to maintain high proficiency levels among Ottawa Fire Services personnel.

## New Fire Station 45

Last March, Ottawa Fire Services opened Fire Station 45 in Kanata North, marking a significant milestone in enhancing emergency response capabilities for the rapidly growing community. The new station, strategically located at 1075 March Road, replaces the former facility at 640 Cameron Harvey Drive. This relocation is part of a broader initiative to better serve the existing, new, and developing neighborhoods in Kanata North and West Carleton-March and was the final commitment for the 2015 Ottawa Fire Service Station Location Study ([ACS2015-COS-EPS-0021](#)).

The station operates as a composite unit, employing both career and volunteer firefighters to ensure a robust and flexible response to emergencies.

## Fire Station 81 Renovations

Ottawa Fire Services received funding in the 2024 Budget to undertake renovations at Fire Station 81 in Stittsville, transforming it from a rural station to a composite station staffed with full-time and rural firefighter. This upgrade is part of ongoing efforts to enhance emergency response capabilities and better serve the growing community. The renovations included modernizing the facility to accommodate both career and volunteer firefighters.

The transition to a composite station involves the addition of career firefighters to the existing volunteer team allowing for a more efficient allocation of resources and ensuring that the appropriate number of firefighters are available based on the level of risk and the nature of the emergency.

The newly renovated Fire Station 81 is scheduled to officially re-open in 2025.

## Updated Station Location Study

Throughout 2024, Ottawa Fire Services completed work on the OFS Station Location Study 2025-2034. Recommendations from this study are a result of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International process, which closely analyzed the Standards of Coverage from a risk management perspective. As the city continues to expand outward, with significant growth and intensification in many suburban and rural communities, forward planning is essential to meet response standards effectively.

The study's recommendations include renovations of Ottawa Fire Services Station 94 in Manotick in 2027 to support full-time staffing by 2028, and renovations and expansion of Ottawa Fire Services Station 93 in Greely in 2030 to support full-time staffing by 2032,

which will address the growing demands in both areas. Due to community population growth and intensification, a transition from a rural response standard to an urban response standard is also recommended.

The goal of the 2025 Station Location Study is to enhance public safety, align emergency response times with community needs, and create a sustainable deployment model for 2025-2034. The findings from this Study were approved by Committee and Council in 2025 ([ACS2025-EPS-OFS-001](#)).

## **A look ahead**

### **Training Centre Project**

The Ottawa Fire Service is advancing plans to develop a new, comprehensive training centre to meet the growing demands of the city's public safety needs. The current facility, built in 1977, no longer meets operational requirements due to increasing demand and factors such as nearby construction.

Ottawa's population is expected to grow by 40% by 2046, reaching 1.4 million people. This growth will place additional pressure on the Fire Service's existing assets and highlights the urgent need for expanded or new facilities to keep pace with demand.

To maximize community benefit, the new training centre will be designed for use by various partner organizations. Planning efforts are currently focused on developing a financially sustainable approach for the construction, commissioning, and long-term maintenance of the facility. Options under consideration include evaluating surplus land within the city.

A preliminary Class D cost estimate has been prepared, outlining the estimated financial requirements based on the facility's programming needs. This estimate will serve as a foundation for further planning as the project progresses.

In the interim, Ottawa Fire Services has undertaken several initiatives to support ongoing training and development including modifying training to reduce smoke and noise and developing a temporary site at Barnsdale Site on 18 acres of land owned by Solid Waste Services. Recent investments in training props have focused on modular systems capable of being relocated to other sites in the future. These include a Drager propane burn simulator, car fire simulator, and a modular structural firefighting live fire unit.



Ottawa Fire Services continues to work with partners in Finance and Planning and Development Services to determine building requirements, costs, and an appropriate funding model and location.

#### Mental health professional update

On December 6, 2023, City Council directed Ottawa Fire Services to appoint a full-time, staff psychologist dedicated to supporting the mental health needs of its personnel. This initiative seeks to proactively address the psychological well-being of the staff, recognizing the high-stress nature of their work. In 2024, Ottawa Fire Services hired a staff psychologist to provide consultation, intervention, mental health assessments, and develop wellness programs tailored to the unique challenges faced by fire service personnel.

Starting in October 2024, the psychologist began seeing members. Some positive outcomes have been observed already, including a 67 percent success rate for personnel avoiding sick leave or returning from sick leave after receiving treatment, with only 33 percent of personnel accessing remaining on sick leave during or after treatment. The Ottawa Fire Services Psychologist continues to regularly visit stations to meet and build rapport with frontline personnel ensuring they are comfortable accessing mental health services if required.

This initiative allows Ottawa Fire Services to identify mental health difficulties earlier and provide treatment recommendations tailored to fire service's needs. Fire services personnel will receive appropriate, evidence-based care, reducing leave and facilitating quicker returns to service. Similarly, psychologist-informed mental health programming, focused on firefighters' specific needs, will enhance the overall well-being of the staff, contributing to a healthier, more resilient workforce.

#### Peer Support and mental health training

The Mental Health Peer Support Program continues to be a critical component of the supports for staff. It is comprised of trained volunteers from each division providing confidential, emotional, and social support to their colleagues in a safe, non-judgmental environment. The team works closely with the staff psychologist to continue evolving the program. Each year, the team receives approximately 300 requests for assistance, highlighting its critical role within the organization.

Ottawa Fire Services offers ongoing training opportunities to all staff to raise awareness and encourage them to seek support when needed. One such initiative is the

implementation of the Road to Mental Readiness training. This program provides resilience and mental health training from qualified trainers, clinicians, and operators, tailored to meet the unique needs of fire service personnel and their families.

Ottawa Fire Services has also partnered with Wounded Warriors Canada to further bolster mental health resources for firefighters, front-line members, and their families. This partnership provides access to a wide range of culturally specific mental health counseling programs.

These programs and partnerships underscore Ottawa Fire Services' commitment to fostering a culture of care and support, ensuring that both the physical and mental health needs of its personnel are met.

## **Conclusion**

The 2024 Ottawa Fire Services annual report highlights the exceptional dedication and resilience of our personnel in managing diverse emergencies and ensuring public safety. Ottawa Fire Services has demonstrated unwavering commitment to protecting our community and continues to meet all emergency response standard times.

As we look forward to the future, Ottawa Fire Services remains committed to its mission to safeguard the well-being of all residents and strengthen community resilience, aligning with the Term of Council priority of creating a city that has affordable housing and is more liveable for all.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations in this report.

## **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.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS**

There are no comments associated with Advisory Committees associated with this report.

## **CONSULTATION**

There were no consultations undertaken related to the drafting of this report as it is a summary of Ottawa Fire Services activities over the past year.

## **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 Regulations*, 191/11, meeting the City of Ottawa's Accessibility Policy, and following the City's Accessibility Design Standards to the greatest extent possible.

## **ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Asset Management implications associated with this report.

## **CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no climate implications associated with this report.

## **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 18 of Schedule F of the Delegation of Authority By-law (2024-265).

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

## **ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

There are no economic implications associated with this report.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

## **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**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

Council has deemed “a city that has affordable housing and is more liveable for all” as a priority in the [2023-2026 Term of Council Priorities report](#). This report aligns with this priority under strategic objective 7: improve emergency response times - align emergency response times with community needs (7a).

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – Ottawa Fire Services 2024 Annual Report Data

## **DISPOSITION**

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

### **Document 1**

Ottawa Fire Services 2024 Annual Report Data