

Report to / Rapport au:

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

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Submitted by / Soumis par:

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**SUBJECT: ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL FOR COLLISION
REPORTING CENTRES**

**OBJET: MODÈLE DE PRESTATION DE SERVICES ALTERNATIF POUR LES
CENTRES DE DÉCLARATION DE COLLISION**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Services Board delegate authority to the Chief of Police to enter into a contract with Accident Support Services International Limited (ASSIL) to operate Collision Reporting Centres on behalf of the Ottawa Police Service in the City of Ottawa.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa approuve la signature d'un contrat avec Accident Support Services International Limited (ASSI) pour la gestion des centres de signalement des collisions au nom du Service de police d'Ottawa dans la ville d'Ottawa.

BACKGROUND

In response to ongoing economic pressures, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) is constantly searching for solutions in which it can be streamlined and efficient in terms of optimizing its operational budget. This includes efforts to direct resources towards primary policing functions as well as those priorities agreed upon by the Service and the Ottawa Police Services Board (Board).

As municipalities across Ontario continue to redirect limited police resources to community priorities in which core policing functions are required for duties that are consistent with their training, these same municipalities are exploring opportunities to generate financial savings through such mechanisms as outsourcing. Best-practices research has indicated that among efforts to modernize the workforce and optimize the provision of core functions, police organizations utilize non-police personnel to find efficiencies.

In 2012, the OPS decided to implement and maintain its own Collision Reporting Centres (CRC) based upon projections that they would be cost-neutral to operate, create approximately \$1.6M in annual revenue derived from the sale of bulk collision reports to insurers, and maximize capacity for patrol by diverting approximately 70 percent of collision-related calls for service to the CRCs. Although the reporting of minor vehicle accidents — those involving no injuries — remains a core policing deliverable, it is primarily done for the benefit of insurance companies as part of the Claims Settlement process, as well as for gathering statistical information used by various partners. For a myriad of reasons, the annual revenue projections for the sale of collision reports have never materialized and have, in fact, steadily declined over the last several years.

The Service's current CRC model is inefficient and expensive; in order to remain viable for the OPS and satisfactory to members of the public, it requires additional capital and human resource investment. During any type of minor disruption, the current CRCs are quickly overwhelmed due to limited capacity — directly attributed to significant wait times, delays in processing collision reports, and the practice of calling on patrol to assist with overflow. The current model has also proved unable to meet original targets for the sale of accident reports to the insurance industry, resulting in an ongoing tendency to report large budget deficits each year.

At the end of 2019 and into 2020, the Service conducted a Customer Service Review Project (CSRP) that resulted in various recommendations that were approved for implementation at the OPS in 2020. One such option — supporting a partnership with Accident Support Services International Ltd (ASSIL) as a third-party CRC — was one of the pivotal recommendations that were viewed as being able to realize the modernization of services, improve efficiencies for the OPS, reduce demands on patrol, and balance associated staffing and budgetary pressures.

DISCUSSION

Reducing the role of police in minor vehicle collision incidents not only facilitates an enhanced, streamlined response but the administrative burden associated with

processing such incidents can arguably be managed more efficiently by a third party. This is directly supported by the fact that collision reporting is currently outsourced to a third-party vendor by at least 28 municipal police services across Ontario.

Current CRC Operating Model

The Service currently operates three CRCs to serve the citizens of Ottawa. The East Front Desk Service (FDS) operates the east-end CRC located 3343 St. Joseph Boulevard; Central FDS operates the central CRC located at 474 Elgin Street; and West FDS operates the west-end CRC located at 211 Huntmar Drive. Those drivers involved in a minor vehicle collision, who do not require a patrol response, must attend a CRC to self-report their collision. While the number of self-reported collisions varies between the CRCs, each is primarily comprised of civilian FDS Agents with Sergeant supervisor oversight.

During the CSRP, the team conducted an analysis of CRC data over a one-year period and concluded that the OPS' collision reporting framework is both "inefficient and ineffective, and that workload exceeds staffing by 24 percent." As a result, there is often a requirement for both overtime and casual staffing costs to bridge those gaps that lead to poor customer service and delayed report processing.

Exploring Alternative Solutions

Various service delivery business models were analyzed to determine the best approach the OPS could employ to provide a seamless, yet effective, method for reporting minor vehicle collisions. Although three viable options were considered as possible solutions, one option, in particular, emerged as the most suitable: outsourcing collision reporting centre services to a third-party vendor.

The CSRP concluded that outsourcing collision reporting to a third-party vendor offers a cost-free alternative to remedy such issues as overtime, casual staffing expenditures, employee burnout, and the current practice of drawing upon precious frontline resources when calls for service exceed CRC capacity.

Benefits of Outsourcing Collision Reporting Centres

The CSRP determined there are many efficiencies and service improvements that can be realized by outsourcing the duties associated with minor accident reporting. These include, but are not limited, to:

- Enhanced duty of care to the community by transitioning to a more effective and efficient customer service experience which culminates in reduced wait-times and a more modernized, streamlined response;

- Enhanced measures to prevent insurance fraud;
- Introduction of process improvements by eliminating the current practice of closing CRCs when demand exceeds capacity; and increasing capacity without OPS' capital and human resource investment;
- Enhanced customer service by FDS Agents for all non-collision reporting matters;
- Realization of significant staffing efficiencies within FDS given a reduced demand for service. This permits an opportunity for the OPS to either reduce FDS FTE positions as part of efforts to find efficiencies, or to redirect resources where there may be greater need;
- Reduced pressures on patrol to provide overflow response; and
- Cost avoidance by deferring, to a third-party vendor, the replacement of aging CRC equipment and annual maintenance costs.

ASSIL's Collision Reporting Centre Business Model

Since 1994, ASSIL has been providing professional collision management solutions for police in partnership with the insurance industry. ASSIL is privately owned and is entirely funded by the insurance industry wherein it works in partnership with police services and insurance companies to assist citizens with reporting minor collisions.

The success of ASSIL's CRC model throughout Ontario, as well as with other police services across North America, clearly demonstrates how its business model concept contributes to an enhanced policing service experience for reporting minor collisions.

The concept of operation for ASSIL in Ottawa would see the introduction of their CRCs in the lobby of each of the three stations where the OPS' CRCs currently are located and staffed by FDS Agents (although ASSIL's workspace in the lobby would be separate from the enclosed FDS space). It is believed that such a model would have the least impact on the community and provide the easiest transition to a new service model.

No costs would be borne by the OPS to establish these new CRCs as ASSIL is contractually responsible for all associated costs.

Introduction of the ASSIL CRC model also has several advantages over the OPS' current collision reporting model for the following reasons:

- 1) ASSIL has developed a simplified, Ministry-approved reporting form that allows them to process collisions three-to-four times faster than police;

- 2) ASSIL utilizes a business model capable of adapting to fluctuating demands for service levels; they are able to expand and employ contract resources as necessary in order to ensure customer service levels remain within established parameters;
- 3) ASSIL has well-established relationships with insurers to facilitate the claims process and enhance the customer service experience; and
- 4) ASSIL permits better collision data and analytics to inform traffic safety initiatives; as part of its contractual obligations and at no cost to the OPS, ASSIL will automate the process of mandated information delivery to the OPS, City of Ottawa Traffic Services, and the Ministry of Transportation.

As mentioned, ASSIL would assume responsibility for both the intake and processing of all minor vehicle accident reports by establishing a presence in the lobbies of the OPS facilities located at 3343 St. Joseph Boulevard, 474 Elgin Street, and 211 Huntmar Drive. This “presence” consists of their staff and self-service kiosks, along with their own infrastructure. To ensure as seamless a transition as possible, ASSIL has proposed it co-locate its self-reporting kiosks near the front desk at each location (as has been done with other municipal police services).

Procurement Process

The recommendation to outsource collision reporting services was presented to the OPS’ Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in December 2019, gaining approval to explore what options may be available.

Working with the City’s Supply Management Division, a Request for Information (RFI) was issued seeking possible private sector companies who could perform the services required.

On March 6, 2020, the RFI closed with three potential respondents. The first two respondents — Ottawa Metro Towing and Myers Automotive Group — indicated an interest in developing a business model but only if a formal bidding process was engaged. The third respondent, ASSIL, was able to provide an established business plan as the industry leader and was subsequently selected as the most suitable choice. It was also at this time that OPS’ Chief Administrative Officer advised that because a contract with ASSIL did not include an exchange of any monies, there was no obligation to embark on a Request for Quotation (RFQ) process (ref: City of Ottawa’s Financial Accountabilities Procedures Manual).

The OPS and ASSIL actively engaged in procurement discussions during which several meetings were held to discuss the ASSIL business model, contractual obligations, and

hold site visits. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, significantly slowed any further progress from being made towards finalizing the contract.

In light of the above, coupled with the fact that ASSIL is the only established source of supply for a very specific need, the OPS is recommending a sole-source contract with ASSIL as doing so presents a minimal risk for the OPS/City of Ottawa. It is anticipated that moving to any type of formal bidding process at this time would only delay the implementation of an already highly regarded, robust collision reporting service.

The OPS is seeking the Board's approval to proceed with a sole-source contract with ASSIL in accordance with s.3.2 of the Financial Accountabilities Procedures Manual. Upon approval by the Board, the OPS' Financial Operations and/or the City's Supply Management Division would begin facilitating the completion of a contract with ASSIL.

CONSULTATION

In considering an outsourcing option, the CSRP consulted with several police services in Ontario including York, Peel, Toronto, Kingston, Durham, and Waterloo. Of those police services already utilizing ASSIL, they confirmed a significant increase in customer satisfaction with the minor collision reporting process. The collision report itself is considerably less onerous due to ASSIL's improvements to it, and their kiosk system allows them to serve three customers simultaneously thereby reducing wait times.

Testimonials of other police services or participating insurance companies include the following:

- "We know that being involved in an auto collision can be very stressful, which is why Economical is proud to partner with ASSIL to help make the process as seamless as possible. Offering customers rapid, reliable information via SMS in these difficult situations helps ensure that our customers are informed about services of trusted vendors," said Hans Reidl, Senior Vice President, Claims at Economical.
- "Under a new partnership with Accident Support Services Ltd., police will decide if they will attend collisions depending on the severity of the crash, injuries and whether the collision is suspicious. Police say the partnership allows officers to attend to other priority calls. "It allows us to now redeploy officers to other police duties and crime prevention initiatives. That time is always

important and valuable to us and equates to money in the budget” said Insp. Sharon Havill, Waterloo Regional Police.

- “Sarnia Police Service’s Collision Reporting Centre (CRC) has been given the green light to continue operating for at least another five years. The police services board agreed to extend the agreement with Accident Support Services Ltd. until May 31, 2025.” Board Chair Mayor Mike Bradley said a nine-month pilot project has proved very successful. “The original apprehensions with the public and everything else did not come to the level that we thought it would,” said Bradley. “It seemed to be accepted fairly well in the community. I think that’s a compliment to all of those involved in it.” Police board member Mike Stark is pleased about the extension. “I want to compliment all of the people involved with this,” he said. “I think it’s been a tremendous addition and a raging success in terms of how it’s come off. The fact that we’re now looking at a five-year extension suggests to me that this is the way that we should be going.” Over 1,000 motor vehicle crashes have been diverted to the centre at police headquarters since it opened on June 11 of 2020. Police say the centre’s success has allowed officers to proactively address other traffic concerns and community issues.

Internal consultation took place with all relevant stakeholders including ITS, Finance, Facilities, Human Resources, Labour Relations, Records Management, and the City of Ottawa.

There has been no public consultation per se, as outsourcing is already widely established across Ontario. However, public consultation efforts have been established to obtain feedback from individuals who have previously utilized the OPS’ CRC services in the past. Those individuals were recently invited to participate in a survey in order to benchmark their level of satisfaction and provide input regarding their user experience. The survey is currently due to close on April 13, 2022, with results to be communicated shortly thereafter.

In terms of ongoing community input, ASSIL will provide quarterly updates to the OPS that will include any issues related to service complaints as well as outlining customer satisfaction levels (obtained by administering periodic customer satisfaction surveys).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no cost to the OPS to implement and support ASSIL-operated CRCs. Per the terms of the contract/agreement, all costs are borne by ASSIL in establishing their CRCs.

It should be noted that outsourcing the collision reporting center functionality will result in a negative revenue stream of approximately \$400K due to the loss of the sale of collision reports; however, this loss will be justifiably offset by a reduction in overtime costs, casual staff expenses, and ongoing operational expenditures related to the replacement of aging equipment, etc.

Perhaps the most significant financial implications stem from the potential for FTE savings. By implementing the ASSIL CRC business model, the OPS will be in a position to significantly reduce the need for FDS Agents given that, current state, collision reporting is a core responsibility of their function that would no longer be required. In anticipation of that possibility, representatives from the OPS' Labour Relations and Human Resources teams met with the OPA's Labour Relations Officers to apprise them of the situation, and all parties were kept informed throughout.

There is nothing in the collective agreement with the OPA that prevents OPS from contracting out this function.

As part of the OPS' commitment to the Board to find \$7.1M in efficiencies, FDS will be directed to explore opportunities for how it can streamline services while maintaining an optimal level of customer service for those requiring simple interactions with police and/or police representatives. Such efficiencies could include consolidation of service locations or hours that better support times of high customer demand.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1: A Proposal to Enter into a Partnership with Accident Support Services International for Collision Reporting Centre Functions.

Document 2: A Strategic Plan to Balance Resources and Modernize the Customer Service Directorate.

CONCLUSION

Through the work of the CSRP, it was determined that the OPS' CRCs were 'inefficient, ineffective, and that workload exceeded resources by 24%.' By outsourcing collision reporting services, the Service has an opportunity to find efficiencies through FDS FTE savings or to redirect resources to other areas within the Service where there may be a greater need.

It is recommended that the Board grant approval to the Chief of Police to enter into a contract with ASSIL for the provision of collision reporting services and, in doing so, allow the OPS to complete a sole-source agreement to outsource this function to ASSIL.

Such approval will allow the OPS to improve customer service, improve efficiency, and provide opportunities for frontline members to concentrate on core policing functions that require their true level of knowledge, skills, and training.