



Office of the Auditor General

AUDIT OF THE OTTAWA FIRE SERVICES BRANCH

2006 Report

Chapter 3

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Audit of the Ottawa Fire Services Branch (OFS) was included as part of the 2006 Audit Plan of the Office of the Auditor General, first presented to Council in December 2004.

The objective of the audit was to review the Management Control Framework of the Ottawa Fire Services Branch. The effectiveness of the Management Control Framework was reviewed to:

1. Assess what is working well and what needs to be improved, and
2. Identify recommended actions for improvement.

The scope of the audit focussed on the management controls from a Branch-wide perspective that are in place to manage and administer Branch programs and services. These controls include the policies, procedures, processes, resources, systems, culture, structure, and tasks and how effectively they support the achievement of the City's and the Branch's objectives.

Although a number of the observations and recommendations have operational implications, the audit did not include a comprehensive review of OFS operations (i.e. the effectiveness of incident response and the distribution and deployment of staff and equipment).

The audit criteria used in assessing the Management Control Framework of the OFS were adapted from the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants Criteria of Control model.

Background

The overall objectives of the Ottawa Fire Services Branch are to:

- Reduce or eliminate loss of life and property;
- Mitigate risk and deliver on the Ottawa 20/20 Plan promise to focus on prevention;
- Enhance quality of life by using the best station-response model as part of the Ottawa 20/20 Plan goals outlined in the Human Services Plan; and,
- Stabilize risk to life and property in large-scale community disasters.

The Ottawa Fire Services Branch operates 43 fire stations, located in 9 districts across the City of Ottawa. Fire Services employs 990 FTEs as well as over 400 part-time fire fighters ("volunteers") who receive an annual stipend plus an hourly wage whenever deployed.

The *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* (the Act) is the chief legislation governing the provision of fire services in Ontario. Provisions in the Act include:

- Municipal responsibilities for fire protection services;
- The role and authority of the Fire Marshal of Ontario;
- The authority of the Minister to establish a Fire Code;
- The rights of entry in emergencies and fire investigations;
- The requirements for fire inspections;
- Offences and enforcement authorities; and,
- Fire fighter employment and labour relations.

To ensure compliance with the Act, each municipality must have:

- a simplified risk assessment;
- a smoke alarm program;
- a program for distribution of public education information; and,
- fire prevention inspections upon complaint or request.

The *Ontario Fire Code* is a regulation made under the Act. It serves as a companion document to the *Ontario Building Code*. The Fire Code provides for the safety of occupants in existing buildings through the elimination or control of fire hazards in and around buildings, the maintenance of life safety systems in buildings, the establishing of a fire safety plan in those buildings where deemed necessary, and the retrofitting of certain occupancies.

Key Findings

1. The audit of the Management Control Framework of the OFS identified a number of strengths within the Branch, including;

- The OFS has made good progress developing a more effective fire service since amalgamation including ensuring standardized training requirements and consistent operating procedures.
- Interrelationships with other related City functions have improved and are in most cases strong.
- The OFS has a strong recruitment and training program in place with typically several hundred prospective recruits awaiting entry-level positions.
- The recently implemented attendance management program has made progress in reducing chronic absenteeism.
- Good progress has been made in implementing a new management information system designed to support fire services.
- The OFS is currently at work on a comprehensive fire risk assessment of the entire City including a station location study to guide revisions to the service delivery model.

- The OFS is at work pursuing improvements in its procurement practices to standardize equipment, streamline purchasing practices, build data bases on existing inventories and implement standing offers.
2. The current legislative and regulatory framework implies a much greater burden on municipal councils to clearly articulate its expectations and provide for its own oversight of the fire service. Many city councils have done so via the creation of an “establishing and regulatory by-law” which identifies the specific characteristics of the fire service including response times, level of public education, frequencies of fire inspections, etc. The City of Ottawa currently does not have such a by-law.
 3. Currently there is no formal mechanism at the City for Council to receive regular detailed information on the activities of the OFS.
 4. The risk assessment and station location currently underway in the OFS should be broad enough to investigate opportunities for increased efficiency and savings that may have arisen as a result of eliminating boundaries that existed prior to amalgamation. In addition, once such a risk assessment is completed, the OFS should establish a process to regularly re-assess fire risk in our community.
 5. In developing an enhanced property inspection and fire investigation program, the OFS should be pursuing the use of fire fighting resources in this area.
 6. Management should implement formal management led post-incident debriefings, participation should be mandatory and operational issues and recommended changes for the future should be documented. A standard format for these debriefings should be developed to better ensure that all substantive issues are reviewed and discussed on a consistent basis and that recommendations arising from these sessions are brought forward for decision-making.
 7. Strategic planning and risk assessment for the City’s fire services should examine the overall role of the Fire Service for the future. The concepts of a regulatory by-law, conducting risk assessments and examining the overall role and programs provided by the fire service leads to the notion of a consolidated long-range strategic plan. The current risk assessment and station location initiative now underway in OFS represents a key first step in this exercise.
 8. The current management structure and many of the existing collective agreement provisions place significant barriers to ensuring an effective management control framework is in place within the OFS. The minimal number of management positions, a culture that discourages effective communication between unionized staff and managers and a promotional process that effectively prevents selecting candidates on the basis of merit has had significant implications on ensuring effective delegation of authority, staff supervision and oversight, assignment of resources, succession planning and performance monitoring.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the existing regulatory by-law for fire services, carried over from the former City of Ottawa, be repealed and that the Ottawa Fire Services develop a new Establishing and Regulatory By-law for Council approval which clearly articulates all key objectives and features of the fire service.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation and will bring forward a By-law in October 2007.

Recommendation 2

That the Ottawa Fire Services develop by-laws for Council approval governing each of the existing cross-boundary agreements with neighbouring municipalities.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Currently there is a mutual aid agreement in place with the Town of Kemptville that was in effect prior to amalgamation. There are also informal arrangements for mutual aid with the municipalities of Clarence-Rockland, Russell, North Dundas and Lanark. Fire Services also purchases fire suppression services annually from the municipalities of Merrickville and Arnprior for those portions of the City that are closer to these centres. While a standard agreement is recommended to formalize these mutual aid services, it is not necessary to have a By-law enacted in every instance. A report approved by Council, contained recommendations that it would be sufficient for the City to enter into mutual aid agreements with specified municipalities, subject to approved terms and conditions. Again, such a report would be confirmed by a By-law at the end of Council. Ottawa Fire Services anticipates bringing these agreements forward in Q3 2007. Ottawa City Council as well as the respective Councils of the neighbouring municipalities will approve these agreements.

Recommendation 3

That the Ottawa Fire Services, in concert with both the OMBI and Fire Marshal initiatives, develop a comprehensive set of performance measures that adequately reflect its strategic and operational objectives in order to provide adequate performance information to Council.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

As part of the Corporate Planning and Performance Reporting Office (CPPRO), performance measures were established and Fire Services has been reporting on these measures for the past year. A comprehensive set of performance measures was also established for Fire Services through the OMBI group, which are currently being reported to Council through the established OMBI reporting process. These measures include Residential Fire Related Injuries per 100,000 population (3 measures - Urban, Rural and Entire Municipality); Percentage of all Residential Fire Related Injuries in Dwellings with a Working Smoke Alarm (entire Municipality); Rate of Firefighter Injuries (entire Municipality); Residential Fire Related Fatalities per 100,000 population (3 measures - Urban, Rural and Entire Municipality); Rate of Residential Structural Fires with Losses per 1,000 households (3 measures - Urban, Rural and Entire Municipality); Rate of Commercial and Industrial Structural Fires with Losses per 1,000 properties (3 measures again); Total Fire Operating Costs per Capita (Urban Operations); Number of Incidents Responded to by Fire Services per 1,000 population (Urban); Number of Property Fires, Explosions and Alarms per 1,000 population (Urban); Number of Rescues per 1,000 population (Urban); Number of Medical Calls per 1,000 population (Urban); Number of Other Incidents per 1,000 population (Urban); Operating Costs for Fire Services per \$1,000 Assessment. The remaining reporting requirements, such as the station notification times, are subject to further implementation of modules within the Records Management System (RMS) anticipated in 2008. In addition to the prescribed OMBI measures, Fire Services agrees to provide an annual report to Council that reflect performance against strategic and operational objects as cited in Management's response to Auditor recommendation # 4 provided appropriate resources can be secured.

Recommendation 4

That the Ottawa Fire Services develop an annual reporting mechanism to provide Council with regular information on overall Branch performance against objectives and performance measures, including the results of all major fire events.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Ottawa Fire Service will report annually, through Standing Committee, as directed above including updates on Branch performance and a consolidated summary of major events from the previous year in Q2 each year. In addition, Fire Services will continue to report its performance through the existing mechanisms such as the Corporate Annual Report, OMBI Annual Report and the Quarterly Performance Report to Council.

Recommendation 5

That the Ottawa Fire Services complete the current risk assessment and station location study on a priority basis and ensure that opportunities for efficiencies are identified.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

In 2004, Council approved funding for a Station Location Study. The study is currently underway and includes a partnership between Ottawa Fire Service and the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office. Part of the study includes the development of a risk assessment for the City of Ottawa based on the local available data. The final report is anticipated to be completed in Q3 2007 and will reflect opportunities for efficiencies and growth driven service requirements that are identified through the study. This report will also provide sufficient information to Council in order for them to approve emergency service response standards for the Fire Service based on the Ontario Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Guidelines.

Recommendation 6

That, once the current risk assessment and station location study is completed, the Ottawa Fire Services establish a process for regularly re-assessing fire risks in the community.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Once the risk assessment is approved by Council, Fire Services will be able to and are committed to regularly updating risks based on updates to input information (i.e., population density, building density etc.). The Public Fire Safety Guidelines (04-45-03) recommend that a municipality update their risk assessment every three years. Given the automated nature of the new risk assessment, the Ottawa Fire Service will be able to update their risk assessment regularly.

Recommendation 7

That the Ottawa Fire Services pursue the use of fire fighter resources to conduct 'in-service' inspections in order to enhance its current inspection program.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Ottawa Fire Services will continue using fire fighter resources to conduct 'in-service inspections' in support of specific targeted programs as has been done in the past. The current 'in-service' inspection program has focused on vulnerable communities such as elderly and the Wake-Up-Get a Working Smoke Alarm program, which has been highly successful and well received throughout the City. In the future, other

programs such as barbeque inspection and kitchen inspection are also being considered as a means of promoting life safety within our community. However, to use front line fire fighter resources for Code enforcement inspections would be cost prohibitive. Extensive training from the Ontario Fire College is required before being qualified to complete Fire Code enforcement inspections. In addition, that training is required to be maintained on a regular basis, which would also result in additional training cost being incurred by the Branch.

Recommendation 8

That the City re-assign responsibility for all hydrant inspections to Drinking Water Services and re-instate inspections of hydrants on City and privately owned properties on a cost-recovery basis.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

This decision would expedite hydrant inspections, performed by Ottawa Fire Services, since a record of the hydrant inspection would be readily available from City records.

Private hydrant inspections on City owned land was provided on a limited basis by Drinking Water Services in the past, but it was assumed by RPAM as a result of a Universal Program Review reduction. As a result RPAM developed a regulatory-compliant Preventive Maintenance Program that provides an effective tracking system through a database. This service is contracted out and RPAM has contractual obligations ending on December 31, 2007. RPAM recommends that the decision for changing the current practice should be based on a cost-comparison analysis.

Drinking Water Services can't take on the responsibility of service without additional resources. However, if directed by Council, to take on the inspection service for hydrants on both City owned and private property, staff would first assess the level of service to these private hydrants to ensure full compliance with regulations and provide a report outlining the budget requirements, potential liability implications and preferred service delivery method. The cost for this service could be recovered on a fee for service basis, as was the case previously.

Recommendation 9

That the Ottawa Fire Services pursue opportunities to enhance the investigation program including :

- (a) placing investigators on shifts vs. the current overtime/on call approach; and**
- (b) establishing a follow-up with on-site crews as part of the investigation process.**

Management Response

(a) Management is supportive of the notion to review a shift rotation model for investigators and to complete a detailed cost/benefit analysis of implementing a potential plan. However, any movement in this direction would require a memorandum of understanding to be added to the collective agreement and will require negotiation with respect to the collective agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association.

(b) Management agrees with the recommendation. Currently there is a follow-up between investigators and on-site crews as part of the fire investigation process.

Recommendation 10

That the Ottawa Fire Services pursue the use of Fire Fighter resources to conduct certain types of fire investigations in order to enhance the current investigation program.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation and has been implementing a solution over the past several years.

In 2002, the Fire Prevention Service Delivery Model approved by Council, included a fire investigations' component that identified the use of fire suppression staff to complete some fire investigations as well as a recommendation to Council that Fire Services increase the number of fires thoroughly investigated.

In an effort to achieve these recommendations, the Ottawa Fire Services signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2003 with the Ontario Fire Marshal (OFM). The agreement was to allow Ottawa Fire Services to deliver the provincial "Fire Cause Determination" course locally, resulting in a lower cost and an accelerated pace of delivery. Currently, there are approximately 260 individuals who have received various levels of the Fire Investigator's Course allowing Ottawa Fire Service to be compliant with the legislation in that all fires are now being investigated. This allows our highly trained Fire Investigation staff to concentrate on those incidents that involve incendiary cause, which include our law enforcement partners - increasing the number of more thorough investigations. Fire Service intends to train all front-line firefighters at the basic level in the next several years.

Acquiring full investigator competencies in the front-line staff would be cost prohibitive based on the extensive multi-year training required not only through the Ontario Fire College but also the two-week course required by NFPA 921 and the Out of Country training provided by Police Services of Ontario.

Recommendation 11

That the Ottawa Fire Services pursue the development of a public education program related to false alarms.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Fire Services will be reporting back in Q4 2007 to Standing Committee after completing a follow up review of findings from comparable municipalities who have recently implemented false alarm programs to determine feasibility of a program in Ottawa.

Recommendation 12

That the Ottawa Fire Services implement a formal management-led incident debriefing process, including a standard format for discussion and documentation of all findings and recommendations and report the results on all major incidents to senior management.

Management Response

Management does not agree with the recommendation.

The current debriefing sessions for incidents are currently conducted at the appropriate operational level of the organization based on severity of the incident. The organizational structure within the Fire Services is as follows: Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chiefs, Platoon Chiefs, District Chiefs, Captain, Lieutenants and Firefighters. The Incident Commander at a call could be a Captain, District Chief or a Platoon Chief depending on the severity of the incident. This is the senior person at the call and is therefore, the best-positioned staff to manage a debriefing session, as they were present and participated in the call. Feedback from the debriefing sessions is then provided to the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief(s) - Management - through a variety of formal processes. The management team then provides direction on changes at a strategic level such as changes to coordination of other City services, tactics and policy and procedures necessary to address weaknesses identified through the debriefing session in an effort to ensure staff are better prepared in the future. Fire management can and do request and receive additional information that they may require on any incident in order to make necessary recommendations on improving services.

Ottawa Fire Service's debriefing process is the following:

- The incident commander submits a form, which included time of incident, damage, name of injured and the apparatus that responded, to the Platoon Office which in turn signs the form and submits it to all Deputy Chiefs and the Fire Chief
- Fires of 3rd alarm (fire requiring eight pump trucks, three ladder trucks, a heavy rescue truck and additional support vehicles in a hydrant area) or greater have a Deputy Fire Chief in attendance

- For all 3rd alarm fires or greater, the Platoon Chief meets with the Deputy for incident management critique
- A formal incident debriefing is held the next shift with most first response stations in attendance along with the Dispatcher that handled the call and the Investigator if available
- Recommendations from Incident Commanders on major fires are discussed at the monthly Platoon Chief/Deputy Chief meetings
- Incident report filed on major fires by Incident Commander with recommendations on equipment, response and tactics
- All Safety Officers complete a report on all “Working Fires”. Any reports identifying problems or issues are submitted to the Deputy Chief of Operations for follow up and disposition.
- Issues from Incident Reports are brought forward to Health and Safety Committee, which is co-chaired by the Deputy Chief of Prevention and Training, for discussion and action. These actions are then submitted to Management Team through the Committee Co-chair for implementation.

Recommendation 13

That the Ottawa Fire Services develop a consolidated Long-Range Strategic Plan that outlines its future role and its strategy regarding the types of resources, training and skills that will be required in the future to best ensure public safety.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Ottawa Fire Services is in the initial stages of planning and has begun to develop a format and approach for the next stages for longer range planning anticipated to be complete in 2008.

Recommendation 14

That the Ottawa Fire Services revise its management structure by creating additional managerial positions below the Deputy Chief position, utilizing existing vacancies.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation in principle.

The Ottawa Fire Services Branch agrees that additional managerial positions are required below the Deputy Chief position, however the issue is currently before an Interest Board of Arbitration regarding the Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters’ Association.

Recommendation 15

That the Ottawa Fire Services explore other potential opportunities to revise its management structure including:

- (a) Assigning Platoon Chiefs to non-shift regular hours;**
- (b) Exchanging the existing non-unionized Rural Sector Chief positions with the existing Platoon Chief positions.**

Management Response

- (a) Management disagrees with the recommendation.

The Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act prescribe the hours of work and shift rotation to be utilized in the Fire Service Suppression and Operations' Divisions. Accordingly, it would not be possible to assign these individuals to non-shift hours. To remove the position from the Platoon would require the consent of the Firefighters' Association, as it would be a collective bargaining issue. Secondly, it is important to note that the Platoon Chiefs are the sole persons in charge of each of four platoons in the 24/7 operations. They are the most senior person on duty citywide – including the rural areas, in the absence of Fire management, to provide oversight on behalf of the City. While management advocate that additional management positions are required overall per Auditor recommendation #14, the operations require oversight at the Platoon Chief level 24/7.

- (b) Management disagrees with the recommendation.

Currently Ottawa Fire Service enjoys the service of a successful Volunteer Complement of approximately 400 Firefighters. At amalgamation, after careful consideration, a decision was made to create the rural management positions as excluded from any bargaining unit. The Rural Sector Chief is a unique position that manages the recruitment, training, retention, oversight and termination of volunteer (non-unionized) firefighters. Their job is non-traditional in nature where they manage operations as well as act as a community liaison between the community they serve and the Ottawa Fire Service. Their hours are irregular by definition with training and other work required in the evenings and weekends when the volunteers are available after traditional work hours. This particular job type does not fit within the Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association and it is appropriate that the Rural Sector Chief positions remain Management and Professional Exempt (MPE) positions.

Recommendation 16

That the City realign its Labour Relations resources in order to provide additional support to the OFS.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Labour Relations' Management agrees with the recommendation in principle, however resource constraints preclude any action being taken at this time.

Recommendation 17

That the Ottawa Fire Services develop a set of core competencies for all officer positions and incorporate these into the job requirements in order to better facilitate merit-based promotions and succession planning.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

It is important to note that the incorporation of competencies into the job requirements will require a major concession with respect to the provisions of the Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association - which continues to advocate promotions based on seniority rather than on merit. Consequently, in order to enhance the promotional system in this manner, a revision to the Collective Agreement is required. In the interim Fire management believes that identification of core competencies for various job types in the Branch will allow the Service to provide training around those core competencies in an effort to ensure that although staff are currently being promoted to a great extent on a seniority basis, they have acquired the skills necessary to do the job. To accomplish this recommendation, significant support and expertise from the Employee Services COE will be required.

Recommendation 18

That the Ottawa Fire Services:

- (a) examine the business processes related to incident reporting to ensure all information is captured as efficiently and effectively as possible;**
- (b) explore the potential to consolidate its information systems activities on a Branch-wide basis; and,**
- (c) in concert with Employee Services, integrate the Volunteer payroll with the corporate payroll system.**

Management Response

(a) Management agrees with the recommendation. Fire Services is currently undergoing a business process review related to incident reporting in an effort to improve the process for capturing information and to assist in ensuring accuracy.

(b) Management agrees with the recommendation. Ottawa Fire Service contemplates being able to achieve consolidation of information on a branch-wide basis with the full implementation of all modules within their RMS anticipated for 2009.

- (c) Management agrees with the recommendation. The City is currently exploring alternate options for paying the volunteer firefighters.

Recommendation 19

That the Community and Protective Services Department explore the potential for,

- (a) integrating its management information activities;**
(b) consolidating its communications centre operations on a Department-wide basis.

Management Response

- (a) Management agrees with the recommendation.

Currently, Ottawa Fire Service has implemented five modules within their RMS: incident reporting, prevention (inspections/property module), training, personnel, and permits modules. Currently being implemented is the asset management/preventive maintenance module with early meetings beginning to look at implementing the Roster Module, which is expected to be operational within the next 24 months. With this information available, Fire Services could provide performance reporting against performance standards in addition to the reports currently being provided per the Auditor's recommendation 3 & 4. This information could be reported on a branch basis in Q1 2008.

- (b) Management does not agree with the recommendation.

A consultant's report completed at amalgamation recommended that the Emergency Services consider co-locating their communication centres. However, preliminary costs for a consolidated communication centre were projected to be considerable and far outweighed the benefits the City was likely to realize. A significant benefit of consolidating a communication centre is the capability to share information. This has been achieved by the implementation of the new Fire CAD system, which is the same system that Ottawa Police use and now both services are sharing information and resources where appropriate. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) controls the Paramedic Communication Centre, although managed by the City of Ottawa, under a contract to the Province. Consequently, any changes to the Centre operations require approval by the Province. Some improvements have been made with information sharing by the limited implementation of the corporate radio system to the Paramedic Service. In addition, current technology allows for a seamless delivery of service to the citizens of Ottawa through the 911 system operated under contract by the Ottawa Police Service.

Finally, a recent benchmarking review of seven By-law Services in the Province, revealed that it is not a best practice to co-locate By-law dispatching services with other City services.

Recommendation 20

That the Ottawa Fire Services pursue the implementation of the Rostering module on a priority basis and ensure that adequate orientation and training is provided to staff to facilitate its acceptance and use.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

To implement the Rostering module within the RMS planned by December 31, 2008. In order to complete the implementation of the Rostering module, Fire Services will need to:

- Upgrade the version of RMS from 4.2 to 6.0 (estimated time to do this is 1 year - IT resources are required for this) as FDM is currently only releasing Rostering in version 6.0.
- Hire a project and consultant team to train staff and resolve the issues. A work plan is currently being drafted.

A dedicated FTE is required to manage on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion

The OFS is proceeding in a number of areas to enhance efficiency and improve operations. Training requirements have been standardized and common operating procedures established. In addition, the undertaking of a comprehensive risk assessment and station location study and the implementation of a new management information system are two of the major initiatives currently underway.

There remain areas for further attention, however. The current management structure and many of the existing collective agreement provisions place significant barriers to ensuring an effective management control framework is in place within the OFS. The minimal number of management positions, a culture that discourages effective communication between unionized staff and managers and a promotional process that effectively prevents selecting candidates on the basis of merit has had significant implications on ensuring effective delegation of authority, staff supervision and oversight, assignment of resources, succession planning and performance monitoring.

With the serious restrictions imposed by the current environment on managerial decision-making, the line between protecting public safety and protecting an established way of operating has become increasingly blurred. Leaving aside managerial concerns, it is difficult to see how sustaining the current approach is financially feasible in the near future. It is perhaps an opportune time for the City of Ottawa to attempt to address these issues.

The development of a regulatory by-law that clearly sets out Council's expectations; a proactive risk assessment program that determines the best use of available resources to

ensure public safety; creative approaches to using existing resources and to revising the current management structure; and the design of a consolidated Long-Range Strategic Plan that ties these concepts and strategies together, may make it possible to remove some of the current constraints to effective management control and to recast the fire service to more appropriately reflect current realities and requirements.

Acknowledgement

We wish to express our appreciation for the cooperation and assistance afforded the audit team by Management.

Also, the advice and assistance provided by staff of the provincial Office of the Fire Marshal has been especially valuable in our analysis.

SOMMAIRE

Introduction

La vérification de la Direction du service des incendies d'Ottawa (SIO) était prévue au plan de vérification de 2006 du Bureau du vérificateur général, qui a été présenté au Conseil municipal en décembre 2004.

Elle avait pour objet d'examiner le cadre de contrôle de gestion de la Direction du service des incendies d'Ottawa. Il s'agissait de déterminer l'efficacité de ce cadre afin :

1. d'évaluer quels étaient ses volets donnant de bons résultats et ceux nécessitant des améliorations; et
2. de préciser les mesures recommandées pour apporter les améliorations nécessaires.

La vérification a mis l'accent sur les contrôles de gestion en place dans l'ensemble de la Direction pour gérer et administrer ses programmes et ses services. Ces contrôles concernent les politiques, les procédures, les processus, les ressources, les systèmes, la culture, la structure et les tâches. La vérification a étudié dans quelle mesure ces éléments contribuent efficacement à l'atteinte des objectifs de la Ville et de la Direction.

Même si un certain nombre d'observations et de recommandations formulées dans le cours de la vérification ont des répercussions sur les opérations, cette vérification n'a pas porté sur l'examen complet des activités du SIO (c.-à-d. l'efficacité des interventions en cas d'incident ainsi que la répartition et le déploiement du personnel et de l'équipement).

Les critères de vérification utilisés pour évaluer le cadre de travail sur le contrôle de gestion du SIO ont été adaptés du modèle des critères de contrôle de l'Institut des comptables agréés du Canada.

Contexte

Les objectifs d'ensemble de la Direction du service des incendies d'Ottawa sont :

- de réduire ou d'éliminer les pertes de vie et de biens;
- d'atténuer les risques et de mettre en œuvre la promesse du Plan Ottawa 20/20, soit mettre l'accent sur la prévention;
- d'améliorer la qualité de vie en utilisant le meilleur modèle d'intervention des casernes dans le cadre des objectifs du Plan Ottawa 20/20 présentés dans le Plan des services à la personne;
- dans le cas de désastres à grande échelle touchant la communauté, stabiliser les risques pour la vie et pour les biens.

La Direction du service des incendies d'Ottawa exploite 43 casernes de pompiers situées dans neuf districts répartis dans toute la ville d'Ottawa. Elle emploie 990 personnes en équivalents temps plein (ETP) ainsi que 400 pompiers à temps partiel qui sont des « bénévoles ». Ceux-ci reçoivent une allocation annuelle à laquelle vient s'ajouter un salaire horaire quand ils sont en service.

La *Loi sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie* (la *Loi*) est le principal texte législatif régissant la prestation des services d'incendie en Ontario. Elle traite, entre autres :

- des responsabilités municipales à l'égard des services de protection contre les incendies;
- du rôle et des pouvoirs du commissaire des incendies de l'Ontario;
- du pouvoir du ministre de constituer un Code de prévention des incendies;
- des droits d'entrée dans les situations d'urgence et les enquêtes sur les incendies;
- des obligations en matière d'inspections;
- des infractions et des pouvoirs en matière d'exécution; et,
- de l'emploi des pompiers et des relations de travail.

Pour assurer la conformité à la *Loi*, chaque municipalité doit se doter :

- d'une évaluation simplifiée des risques;
- d'un programme de détecteurs de fumée;
- d'un programme d'éducation et d'information du public;
- d'un programme d'inspections de prévention des incendies en cas de plainte ou de demande.

Le Code de prévention des incendies de l'Ontario est un règlement adopté en vertu de la *Loi*. Il est utilisé de pair avec le Code du bâtiment de l'Ontario. Ce Code de prévention des incendies traite de la sécurité des occupants dans les édifices déjà construits en s'efforçant d'y éliminer ou d'y contrôler les risques d'incendie, aussi bien à l'intérieur qu'à proximité, en veillant à l'entretien des systèmes y assurant la sécurité des personnes, à la mise en place d'un plan de sécurité des personnes dans ces édifices quand cela est jugé nécessaire et en imposant la remise en état de certains locaux occupés.

Principales constatations

1. La vérification du cadre de travail sur le contrôle de gestion de la Direction du service des incendies d'Ottawa a permis de relever un certain nombre de points forts, dont :
 - le SIO a réellement amélioré son efficacité depuis la fusion, en imposant, entre autres, des exigences normalisées de formation et des procédures de fonctionnement cohérentes;
 - les interrelations avec les autres fonctions connexes de la Ville ont été améliorées et sont étroites dans la majorité des cas;

- le SIO dispose d'un programme efficace de recrutement et de formation qui lui a permis de trouver plusieurs centaines de recrues éventuelles qui attendent que des postes se libèrent au premier niveau;
 - le programme de gestion des présences récemment mis en place a permis de réduire l'absentéisme chronique;
 - la mise en œuvre d'un nouveau système d'information de gestion conçu pour venir à l'appui du Service des incendies a bien progressé;
 - le SIO procède actuellement à une évaluation complète des risques d'incendie dans toute la Ville, y compris une étude de l'emplacement des casernes qui sera utile pour réviser le modèle de prestation de services;
 - le SIO travaille à améliorer ses pratiques d'acquisition pour standardiser les équipements, simplifier les pratiques d'achat, construire des bases de données sur les stocks actuels et mettre en place un système d'offres permanentes.
2. Le cadre législatif et réglementaire actuel impose une charge beaucoup plus lourde aux conseils municipaux qui doivent structurer clairement leurs attentes et assurer leur propre surveillance des services des incendies. De nombreux conseils municipaux ont adopté pour cela un règlement spécifique, parfois appelé « règlement constitutif et de gérance, » qui définit les caractéristiques précises du service des incendies, y compris les délais d'intervention, le niveau d'éducation publique, la fréquence des inspections de prévention des incendies, etc. La Ville d'Ottawa n'a pas encore adopté de tel règlement.
 3. La Ville ne dispose pas actuellement de mécanismes officiels pour informer régulièrement et de façon détaillée le Conseil sur les activités du SIO.
 4. L'évaluation des risques et de l'emplacement des casernes actuellement en cours au SIO devrait avoir une portée suffisante pour permettre d'étudier les moyens d'accroître l'efficacité et de réaliser des économies, rendues possibles par l'élimination des lignes de démarcation entre les territoires d'avant la fusion. De plus, lorsque cette évaluation sera terminée, le SIO devrait se doter d'un processus pour réévaluer régulièrement les risques d'incendie dans notre communauté.
 5. En se dotant d'un programme amélioré d'inspections des biens et d'enquêtes sur les incendies, le SIO devrait s'efforcer d'utiliser ses ressources de lutte contre les incendies.
 6. La direction devrait mettre en place des séances officielles de débriefage dirigés par la gestion après les interventions, auxquelles la participation serait obligatoire et qui permettraient de documenter les questions opérationnelles et les modifications recommandées. Ces séances devraient suivre une procédure standardisée pour s'assurer que toutes les questions importantes sont examinées et discutées de façon cohérente, et que les recommandations qui en découlent sont transmises aux décideurs.

7. L'évaluation de la planification stratégique et des risques du Service des incendies de la Ville devrait se pencher sur les grandes lignes du rôle du Service des incendies à l'avenir. Le concept d'un règlement constitutif et de gérance, d'évaluations de risques et l'étude de l'ensemble des rôles et des programmes assurés par le Service des incendies conduit à la notion d'un plan stratégique à long terme et consolidé. L'évaluation des risques et l'initiative sur l'emplacement des casernes qui sont actuellement en cours au SIO constituent une première étape importante de cet exercice.
8. La structure actuelle de gestion et nombre de dispositions de la convention collective nuisent à la mise en place d'un cadre de travail efficace sur le contrôle de gestion au sein du SIO. Le nombre minimal de postes de gestion, une culture qui décourage les communications efficaces entre le personnel syndiqué et les gestionnaires et un mécanisme de promotions qui empêche de sélectionner des candidats selon le principe du mérite ont eu des répercussions importantes sur la délégation efficace des pouvoirs, la supervision et la surveillance du personnel, l'affectation des ressources, la planification de la relève et le contrôle du rendement.

Recommandations

Recommandation 1

Que le règlement actuel qui s'applique au Service des incendies de l'ancienne Ville d'Ottawa, soit abrogé et que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa prépare un nouveau règlement constitutif et de gérance à soumettre à l'approbation du Conseil et présentant clairement tous les objectifs et toutes les caractéristiques importantes du Service des incendies.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation et présentera au Conseil un nouveau règlement en octobre 2007.

Recommandation 2

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa prépare des règlements, à soumettre à l'approbation du Conseil, régissant chacune des ententes conclues concernant des interventions en dehors de leurs territoires respectifs.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Actuellement, une entente d'assistance mutuelle est en vigueur avec la Ville de Kemptville. Elle l'était déjà avant la fusion. Il y a également des ententes informelles d'assistance mutuelle avec les municipalités de Clarence-Rockland, de Russell, de North Dundas et de Lanark. Chaque année, le Service des incendies achète également des services de lutte contre les incendies des municipalités de Merrickville

et d'Arnprior pour les parties du territoire de la Ville qui sont plus proches de ces centres. Si l'utilisation d'un modèle d'entente est recommandée pour officialiser ces services d'assistance mutuelle, il n'est pas nécessaire d'adopter à chaque fois un règlement pour entériner ces ententes. Un rapport, qui a été approuvé par le Conseil, recommandait que la Ville conclue des ententes d'assistance mutuelle avec des municipalités précises, sous réserve de l'approbation des conditions. Là encore, un tel rapport serait entériné par un règlement adopté à la fin de la réunion du Conseil. Le Service des incendies d'Ottawa s'attend à soumettre ces ententes à l'approbation du Conseil au cours du troisième trimestre de 2007. Le Conseil municipal d'Ottawa et les conseils des municipalités environnantes concernées approuveront ces ententes.

Recommandation 3

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa, de concert avec l'IACSM et avec les services du commissaire aux incendies de l'Ontario, élabore un ensemble complet de mesures du rendement qui tiennent compte de façon adéquate de ses objectifs stratégiques et opérationnels afin de fournir au Conseil des renseignements adaptés sur le rendement.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le Service de la planification municipale et de l'évaluation du rendement (SPMER) a défini des mesures du rendement que le Service des incendies a utilisées pour faire rapport l'an dernier. Un ensemble complet de mesures du rendement a également été préparé à l'intention du Service des incendies par l'IACSM. Celles-ci font actuellement l'objet de rapports transmis au Conseil dans le cadre du processus de rapports de l'IACSM qui a été mis en place. Ces mesures comprennent :

- le nombre de blessures liées aux incendies dans des résidences par 100 000 habitants (trois mesures, zones urbaines, zones rurales et toute la municipalité);
- le pourcentage de toutes les blessures liées aux incendies dans des résidences équipées d'un détecteur de fumée en état de fonctionnement (toute la municipalité);
- le taux de blessures chez les pompiers (toute la municipalité);
- le nombre de décès liés à des incendies dans des résidences par 100 000 habitants (trois mesures - zones urbaines, zones rurales et toute la municipalité);
- le taux d'incendies à des structures de résidence avec pertes par 1 000 ménages (trois mesures - zones urbaines, zones rurales et toute la municipalité);

- le taux d'incendies structurels avec pertes dans des locaux commerciaux et industriels par 1 000 propriétés (encore trois mesures);
- les coûts totaux d'exploitation du Service des incendies par habitant (opérations urbaines);
- le nombre d'incidents auxquels a répondu le Service des incendies par 1 000 habitants (zones urbaines);
- le nombre d'incendies, d'explosions et d'alarmes dans des propriétés par 1 000 habitants (zones urbaines);
- le nombre de sauvetages par 1 000 habitants (zones urbaines);
- le nombre d'appels pour raison médicale par 1 000 habitants (zones urbaines);
- le nombre d'autres incidents par 1 000 habitants (zones urbaines); et
- les coûts d'exploitation du Service des incendies par 1 000 \$ d'évaluation.

Les autres exigences de rapport, comme les délais pour aviser les casernes, sont soumis à la mise en place d'autres modules dans le Système de gestion des dossiers (SGD), prévue pour 2008. Outre les mesures imposées par l'IACSM, le Service des incendies convient de produire un rapport annuel destiné au Conseil qui analysera le rendement en regard des objectifs stratégiques et opérationnels, tels qu'ils sont cités dans la réponse de la direction à la recommandation n° 4 du vérificateur, sous réserve de l'obtention des ressources nécessaires.

Recommandation 4

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa élabore un mécanisme annuel de rapport pour fournir régulièrement au Conseil des renseignements sur le rendement global de la Direction en regard des objectifs et des mesures du rendement, y compris les résultats de tous les incendies importants.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. Le Service des incendies d'Ottawa fera rapport chaque année, par l'intermédiaire du Comité permanent, comme indiqué ci-dessus, y compris en faisant le point sur le rendement de la Direction et en présentant un résumé consolidé des événements majeurs de l'année précédente au cours du second trimestre de chaque année. De plus, le Service des incendies continuera à faire rapport sur son rendement par l'intermédiaire des mécanismes actuellement en place comme le Rapport annuel de la ville, le Rapport annuel de l'IACSM et le Rapport trimestriel sur le rendement remis au Conseil.

Recommandation 5

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa termine l'évaluation actuelle des risques et l'étude sur l'emplacement des casernes de façon prioritaire et veille à cerner les possibilités d'amélioration de l'efficacité.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. En 2004, le Conseil a approuvé le financement d'une étude sur l'emplacement des casernes. Cette étude est en cours et est réalisée dans le cadre d'un partenariat entre le Service des incendies d'Ottawa et le Bureau du commissaire des incendies de l'Ontario. Une partie de cette étude est consacrée à une évaluation des risques encourus par la Ville d'Ottawa à partir des données dont on dispose au niveau local. Le rapport devrait être terminé au troisième trimestre de 2007 et fera état des possibilités d'amélioration de l'efficacité et des besoins du Service des incendies imputables à la croissance, définis au cours de l'étude. Le rapport fournira également suffisamment d'information au Conseil pour lui permettre d'approuver les normes d'intervention du Service des incendies en cas d'urgence, basées sur les lignes directrices publiques sur la sécurité incendie du commissaire des incendies de l'Ontario.

Recommandation 6

Lorsque l'évaluation des risques et l'étude sur l'emplacement des casernes, qui sont actuellement en cours, seront terminées, que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa mette en place un processus pour évaluer à nouveau régulièrement les risques d'incendie dans la communauté.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. Lorsque l'évaluation des risques sera approuvée par le Conseil, le Service des incendies s'engagera à réviser régulièrement les risques et sera en mesure de le faire. Il se servira pour cela des informations qui auront été mises à jour (c.-à-d. densité de la population, densité des constructions, etc.). Les Lignes directrices publiques sur la sécurité incendie (04-45-03) recommandent qu'une municipalité procède tous les trois ans à une mise à jour de son évaluation des risques. Étant donné la nature automatisée de la nouvelle évaluation des risques, le Service des incendies d'Ottawa sera en mesure de mettre à jour régulièrement cette évaluation.

Recommandation 7

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa continue à recourir à ses pompiers pour réaliser des inspections « en service » afin d'améliorer son programme actuel d'inspections.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. Le Service des incendies d'Ottawa va continuer à recourir à ses pompiers pour procéder à des inspections « en service » dans le cadre de programmes précisément ciblés, comme il l'a fait par le passé. Le programme actuel d'inspection « en service » cible de façon prioritaire les communautés vulnérables, comme les personnes âgées. Le SIO participe aussi au programme Réveillez-vous! Procurez-vous un détecteur de fumée qui fonctionne, qui

a été une grande réussite et qui a été très bien reçu dans toute la Ville. À l'avenir, d'autres programmes comme les inspections de barbecues et de cuisines sont également envisagés afin de promouvoir la sécurité des personnes dans notre communauté. Toutefois, l'utilisation de pompiers pour procéder à des inspections, pour respecter le Code, serait une solution trop coûteuse. Il faut avoir suivi une formation sérieuse au Collège des pompiers de l'Ontario pour avoir les compétences nécessaires pour procéder à des inspections visant à l'application du Code de prévention des incendies. De plus, la formation acquise doit être rafraîchie régulièrement, ce qui entraînerait des coûts de formation additionnels pour la Direction.

Recommandation 8

Que la Ville confie à nouveau la responsabilité de toutes les inspections de bornes-fontaines aux Services de gestion de l'eau potable et procède à nouveau aux inspections des bornes-fontaines sur les terrains de la Ville et sur les terrains privés sur une base de recouvrement des coûts.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. Cette décision accélérerait l'inspection des bornes-fontaines réalisée par le Service des incendies d'Ottawa, puisqu'un dossier des inspections de bornes-fontaines serait déjà disponible dans les dossiers de la Ville.

Par le passé, les Services de gestion de l'eau potable de la Ville s'occupaient dans une certaine limite des inspections de bornes-fontaines privées sur les terrains appartenant à la Ville, mais c'était en réalité la Gestion des biens immobiliers (GBI) qui procédait à ces inspections à la suite des réductions découlant de l'Examen universel des programmes. La GBI a alors préparé un programme de maintenance préventive respectueux de la réglementation qui fournit un système de suivi efficace par le biais d'une base de données. Ce service est sous-traité et la GBI est tenue par le contrat jusqu'au 31 décembre 2007. La GBI recommande que la décision de modifier l'usage actuel soit fonction d'une analyse comparative des coûts.

Les Services de gestion de l'eau potable ne peuvent assumer la responsabilité de ces services sans disposer de ressources additionnelles. Toutefois, si le Conseil municipal leur donne l'ordre de procéder aux inspections des bornes-fontaines situées sur les terrains de la Ville et sur des terrains privés, le personnel commencera par évaluer le niveau de service à assurer à ces bornes-fontaines privées pour garantir la pleine conformité à la réglementation et il produira un rapport présentant les besoins budgétaires, les répercussions possibles sur les responsabilités ainsi engagées et la méthode de prestation de services préférée. Le coût de ce service pourrait être recouvert en prélevant des frais (par rémunération à l'acte), comme c'était le cas auparavant.

Recommandation 9

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa cherche des possibilités d'améliorer le programme d'enquêtes, et entre autres :

- (a) d'établir des quarts de travail pour les enquêteurs au lieu de faire appel au temps supplémentaire et au travail sur appel, qui est l'approche actuelle;**
- (b) d'organiser un suivi avec les équipes sur le terrain dans le cadre du processus d'enquêtes.**

Réponse de la direction

(a) La Direction est favorable à l'idée d'envisager un modèle de rotation des quarts de travail pour les enquêteurs et de réaliser une analyse détaillée des coûts et des avantages de la mise en œuvre d'un éventuel plan. Toutefois, tout geste en ce sens nécessiterait d'ajouter un protocole d'entente à la convention collective et imposerait des négociations sur cette convention collective entre la Ville d'Ottawa et l'association des pompiers d'Ottawa (Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association).

(b) La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. Actuellement, il y a un suivi entre les enquêteurs et les équipes sur le terrain dans le cadre du processus d'enquête sur les incendies.

Recommandation 10

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa continue de recourir à ses pompiers pour mener certains types d'enquête sur des incendies afin d'améliorer le programme actuel d'enquêtes.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation et a appliqué une solution de la même nature au cours des dernières années.

En 2002, le modèle de prestation de services de lutte contre les incendies, approuvé par le Conseil, comportait un élément d'enquête sur les incendies qui faisait état de l'utilisation de pompiers pour mener à bien certaines enquêtes. Ce modèle avait alors abouti à recommander au Conseil que le Service des incendies augmente le nombre des incendies faisant l'objet d'une enquête poussée.

En tentant de mettre en œuvre ces recommandations, le Service des incendies d'Ottawa a signé un protocole d'entente en 2003 avec le commissaire des incendies de l'Ontario. L'entente devait permettre au Service des incendies d'Ottawa de donner le cours provincial de « Détermination de l'origine des incendies », ce qui permettait de réduire les coûts et d'accélérer le rythme auquel les cours étaient donnés. Actuellement, environ 260 personnes ont suivi le cours d'enquêteur sur les incendies à divers niveaux, ce qui permet au Service des incendies d'Ottawa de se conformer à la législation puisque tous les incendies font maintenant l'objet d'une enquête. Nos enquêteurs sur les incendies, qui ont suivi une formation poussée, peuvent ainsi se

concentrer sur les cas d'incendies d'origine volontaire, qui font appel à nos partenaires des services d'application de la loi. Cela a fait grimper le nombre d'enquêtes poussées. Le Service des incendies a l'intention de faire suivre à tous les pompiers de première ligne le cours de base au cours des années à venir.

Assurer une formation complète d'enquêteur à l'ensemble du personnel de première ligne serait trop coûteux du fait des vastes exigences de formation étalées sur plusieurs années qui imposent non seulement d'aller au Collège des pompiers de l'Ontario mais également de suivre un cours de deux semaines exigé par le NFPA 921 et de suivre la formation à l'étranger assurée par les services de police de l'Ontario.

Recommandation 11

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa poursuive la préparation d'un programme d'éducation du public sur les fausses alertes.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le Service des incendies fera rapport au cours du quatrième trimestre de 2007 au Comité permanent après avoir procédé à l'examen de suivi des constatations des municipalités comparables qui ont récemment mis en œuvre des programmes de fausses alertes afin de déterminer la faisabilité de la mise en place d'un tel programme à Ottawa.

Recommandation 12

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa mette en place un processus officiel de débriefage des incidents dirigé par la direction, y compris un modèle standard pour la discussion et la documentation de toutes les constatations et de toutes les recommandations, et que des rapports sur les résultats soient présentés à la haute direction pour tous les incidents majeurs.

Réponse de la direction

La direction n'est pas d'accord avec cette recommandation. Les séances actuelles de débriefage à la suite des incidents se tiennent actuellement au niveau opérationnel de l'organisation qui convient en fonction de la gravité de l'incident. La structure organisationnelle du Service des incendies est la suivante : directeur du Service des incendies, chefs adjoints du Service des incendies, chefs de peloton, chefs de district, capitaines, lieutenants et pompiers. Le commandant présent sur le lieu de l'incident sera un capitaine, un chef de district ou un chef de peloton, selon la gravité de l'incident. C'est le plus haut responsable sur place à la suite d'un appel et c'est donc lui qui est le mieux en mesure de gérer la séance de débriefage, puisqu'il était présent à l'incident et y a participé. Les commentaires recueillis lors de la séance de débriefage sont ensuite transmis au directeur du Service des incendies et au chef

adjoind du Service des incendies (gestion) en appliquant toute une gamme de processus officiels. L'équipe de direction fixe ensuite les modifications à apporter au niveau stratégique comme celles concernant la coordination avec d'autres services de la Ville, les tactiques, la politique et les procédures nécessaires pour faire face aux faiblesses relevées lors de la séance de débriefage afin de tenter d'être mieux préparés à l'avenir. La direction du Service des incendies peut demander et recevoir (et elle le fait) des renseignements additionnels sur tout incident afin de formuler les recommandations nécessaires pour l'amélioration des services.

Le processus de débriefage du Service des incendies d'Ottawa est le suivant :

- Le commandant présent sur le lieu de l'incident remplit un formulaire, qui précise l'heure de l'incident, les dommages, le nom des blessés et les équipements utilisés. Il le remet au Bureau du peloton qui signe le formulaire et le transmet à tous les chefs adjoints et au directeur du Service des incendies.
- Un chef adjoint du Service des incendies est présent pour les incendies ayant nécessité trois alertes (incendies nécessitant huit camions à pompe, trois camions à échelle, un camion de sauvetage lourd et des véhicules de soutien additionnels dans le secteur d'une bouche d'incendie) ou plus importants.
- Pour tous les incendies de ce niveau (trois alertes) ou supérieur, le chef de peloton rencontre le chef adjoint pour procéder à une analyse critique de la gestion de l'incident.
- Une séance officielle de débriefage de l'incident est organisée au cours du quart de travail suivant avec la plupart des casernes ayant participé à la première intervention, à laquelle assistent également le répartiteur qui a reçu l'appel et l'enquêteur, s'il est disponible.
- Les recommandations des commandants présents sur le lieu de l'incident sont discutées lors de la réunion mensuelle des chefs de peloton et des chefs adjoints, dans le cas d'incendies importants.
- Des rapports d'incident sont remplis dans les cas d'incendies majeurs par les commandants présents sur place, qui formulent des recommandations concernant l'équipement, l'intervention et la tactique.
- Tous les agents de sécurité remplissent un rapport sur tous les « feux en cours ». Tout rapport faisant état de problèmes ou de questions est présenté au chef adjoint des Opérations aux fins de suivi.
- Les questions provenant des rapports d'incident sont étudiées par le Comité de la santé et de la sécurité, coprésidé par le chef adjoint de la Prévention et de la Formation, pour en discuter et proposer des mesures. Ces mesures sont ensuite soumises à l'équipe de direction par le coprésident du Comité afin d'être mises en œuvre.

Recommandation 13

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa prépare un plan stratégique consolidé à long terme qui définit son rôle à venir et sa stratégie concernant les types de ressources, de formation et de compétences qui seront nécessaires à l'avenir pour assurer le mieux possible la sécurité du public.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. Le Service des incendies d'Ottawa en est aux premières étapes de cette planification et a commencé à préparer un modèle et une approche pour les prochaines étapes de la planification à plus long terme qui devraient être terminées en 2008.

Recommandation 14

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa révise sa structure de gestion en créant des postes de gestion additionnels relevant du poste de chef adjoint en utilisant les postes vacants actuellement.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord, en principe, avec la recommandation. La Direction du service des incendies d'Ottawa reconnaît qu'il faut créer des postes de gestion relevant du poste de chef adjoint, mais la question est actuellement à l'étude devant un conseil d'arbitrage relativement à la convention collective conclue entre la Ville d'Ottawa et l'association des pompiers d'Ottawa (Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association).

Recommandation 15

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa étudie d'autres possibilités pour réviser sa structure de gestion, y compris :

- (a) affecter des chefs de peloton à des horaires réguliers non soumis à des quarts de travail;
- (b) échanger les postes actuels de chef de secteur rural qui ne sont pas syndiqués avec les postes actuels de chef de peloton.

Réponse de la direction

- (a) La direction n'est pas d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La convention collective conclue entre la Ville d'Ottawa et l'association des pompiers d'Ottawa (Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association) et la *Loi sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie* prescrit les heures de travail et les quarts de travail dans les Services de lutte contre les incendies. En conséquence, il ne serait pas possible d'affecter ces personnes à des horaires non soumis à des quarts. Retirer les postes du niveau d'un peloton nécessiterait le consentement du syndicat des pompiers, et c'est une question qui relèverait de la négociation collective. Ensuite, il est important de signaler qu'un chef de peloton est la personne seule responsable de chacun des

quatre pelotons 24 heures sur 24 et sept jours sur sept. Ce sont les personnes ayant les plus hautes responsabilités qui soient en service à l'échelle de la Ville, y compris dans les régions rurales, en l'absence de la direction du Service des incendies, pour assurer des services de surveillance au nom de la Ville. Si la direction reconnaît, conformément à la recommandation n° 14 du vérificateur, qu'il faudrait davantage de postes de gestion, les opérations nécessitent une surveillance au niveau des chefs de peloton 24 heures sur 24 et sept jours sur sept.

(b) La direction n'est pas d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Actuellement, le Service des incendies d'Ottawa fait appel aux services d'environ 400 pompiers volontaires. Lors de la fusion, après une étude attentive, il a été décidé de créer des postes de gestion des zones rurales qui ne relevaient pas d'une unité de négociation. Les postes de chefs de secteur rural sont des postes uniques dont les titulaires gèrent le recrutement, la formation, le maintien en poste, la surveillance et la cessation d'emploi des pompiers bénévoles (non syndiqués). Leur travail n'est pas traditionnel de par sa nature puisqu'ils s'occupent des opérations tout en assurant les liaisons entre la collectivité desservie et le Service des incendies d'Ottawa. Leurs heures de travail sont irrégulières par définition puisqu'ils doivent suivre des formations et réaliser d'autres travaux le soir ou les fins de semaine, lorsque les bénévoles sont disponibles après leurs heures normales de travail. Ce type précis d'emploi ne cadre pas avec la convention collective conclue entre la Ville d'Ottawa et l'association des pompiers d'Ottawa (Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association) et il faut que les postes de chef des secteurs ruraux continuent à être des postes de direction et de professionnels exemptés.

Recommandation 16

Que la Ville réaffecte ses spécialistes en relations de travail afin de fournir un soutien additionnel au SIO.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La direction des Relations de travail est d'accord en principe avec la recommandation, mais les contraintes en matière de ressources empêchent de prendre quelque mesure que ce soit pour l'instant.

Recommandation 17

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa définisse un ensemble de compétences de base pour tous les postes d'officier et les intègre aux exigences des postes afin de faciliter les promotions au mérite et la planification de la relève.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Il est important de signaler que l'intégration des compétences aux exigences d'un emploi nécessitera une concession majeure dans les dispositions de la convention collective conclue entre la Ville d'Ottawa et l'association des pompiers d'Ottawa (Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association), qui continue à privilégier les promotions à l'ancienneté plutôt qu'au mérite. En conséquence, pour améliorer le système professionnel de cette manière, il faudra procéder à une révision de la convention collective. Dans l'intervalle, la direction du Service des incendies estime que l'identification des compétences de base pour ses divers types d'emploi permettra au Service d'assurer la formation à ces compétences de base pour veiller à ce que, même si les promotions se font actuellement dans une large mesure en fonction de l'ancienneté, le personnel ait acquis les compétences nécessaires pour faire le travail. Pour mettre en œuvre cette recommandation, il faudra un appui important et les compétences du Centre d'expertise des Services aux employés.

Recommandation 18

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa :

- (a) examine les processus opérationnels liés aux modalités de rapport sur les incidents afin de s'assurer que toutes les informations nécessaires sont recueillies de façon aussi efficiente et efficace que possible;**
- (b) étudie la possibilité de consolider ses activités concernant les systèmes d'information à l'échelle de la Direction;**
- (c) de concert avec les Services aux employés, intègre la liste de paie des bénévoles au système de paie de la Ville.**

Réponse de la direction

(a) La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. Le Service des incendies a lancé un examen des processus opérationnels concernant les modalités de rapport sur les incidents pour tenter d'améliorer le processus afin de recueillir l'information nécessaire et de contribuer à en assurer la précision.

(b) La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. Le Service des incendies d'Ottawa envisage de consolider l'information à l'échelle de la Direction avec la mise en œuvre complète de tous les modules du SGD prévue pour 2009.

(c) La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation. La Ville étudie actuellement d'autres solutions pour la paie des pompiers bénévoles.

Recommandation 19

Que les Services communautaires et de protection étudient la possibilité :

- (a) d'intégrer les activités d'information de gestion;**
- (b) consolider les activités de son centre de communications à l'échelle du Service.**

Réponse de la direction

(a) La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Actuellement, le Service des incendies d'Ottawa a mis en œuvre cinq modules du SGD qui sont les rapports sur les incidents, la prévention (module inspections / immobiliers), la formation, le personnel et les permis. Le module actuellement mis en œuvre est celui de la gestion des biens et de l'entretien préventif, les premières réunions portant sur la mise en œuvre du module de tableau de service, qui devrait être opérationnel dans les 24 prochains mois. Lorsque cette information sera disponible, le Service des incendies pourra fournir des rapports sur le rendement en regard des normes en la matière en plus des rapports actuellement produits, conformément aux recommandations 3 et 4 du Vérificateur. Cette information pourrait faire l'objet de rapports à l'échelle de la Direction au cours du premier trimestre de 2008.

(b) La direction n'est pas d'accord avec la recommandation.

Un rapport de consultant préparé lors de la fusion a recommandé que les Services d'urgence envisagent d'implanter leurs centres de communications au même endroit. Toutefois, l'évaluation des coûts préliminaires d'un tel regroupement des centres de communication s'est avérée considérable et dépassait de beaucoup les avantages que la Ville en aurait probablement retiré. Un avantage important de la consolidation des centres de communications est la possibilité de partager l'information. Cet objectif a été atteint en mettant en œuvre le nouveau système Fire CAD, qui est le même que celui utilisé par la Police d'Ottawa et les deux services peuvent maintenant échanger l'information et les ressources quand il y a lieu. C'est le ministère de la Santé et des soins de longue durée qui exerce le contrôle du Centre de communications paramédicales, même s'il est géré par la Ville d'Ottawa en vertu d'un contrat avec la province. En conséquence, toute modification des activités du Centre nécessite l'approbation de la province. Certaines améliorations ont été apportées à l'échange d'informations avec la mise en œuvre limitée d'un système municipal de liaisons radio pour les services paramédicaux. De plus, la technologie actuelle permet une prestation continue de services aux citoyens d'Ottawa grâce au système 911 exploité à contrat par le Service de police d'Ottawa.

Enfin, un examen comparatif récent de sept services de règlements dans la Province a révélé que l'installation de services de répartition réglementés dans les mêmes locaux que d'autres services de la Ville n'est pas une pratique conseillée.

Recommandation 20

Que le Service des incendies d'Ottawa poursuive la mise en œuvre de son module de tableau de service sur une base prioritaire et veille à ce que le personnel suive l'orientation et la formation nécessaires afin d'assurer l'acceptation et l'utilisation du tableau.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La mise en œuvre du module de tableau de service au sein du SGD est prévue pour le 31 décembre 2008. Afin de terminer la mise en œuvre de ce module, le service des incendies devra :

- mettre à jour la version du SGD en passant de la version 4.2 à la version 6.0 (on prévoit que cela prendra un an et qu'il faudra avoir des ressources en TI) puisque FSM publie actuellement la version 6.0.
- embaucher une équipe de projet et de consultants pour former le personnel et résoudre les questions qui apparaîtront. Un plan de travail est en cours de préparation.

Il faudra un ETP pour gérer ce projet sur une base continue.

Conclusion

Le SIO travaille dans un certain nombre de secteurs pour améliorer l'efficacité et ses activités. Les besoins en formation ont été normalisés et des procédures de fonctionnement communes définies. De plus, la réalisation d'une évaluation complète des risques et d'une étude sur l'emplacement des casernes, et la mise en œuvre d'un nouveau système d'information de gestion, sont deux des principales initiatives actuellement en cours.

Il reste cependant des secteurs auxquels il faut prêter attention. La structure actuelle de gestion et nombre des dispositions actuelles de la convention collective empêchent de s'assurer qu'on dispose d'un cadre de contrôle de gestion efficace au sein du SIO. Le nombre minimal de postes de gestion, une culture qui décourage les communications efficaces entre le personnel syndiqué et les gestionnaires et un mécanisme de promotions qui empêche de sélectionner les candidats selon le principe du mérite ont eu des répercussions importantes sur la délégation efficace des pouvoirs, la supervision et la surveillance du personnel, l'affectation des ressources, la planification de la relève et le contrôle du rendement.

Avec les restrictions lourdes imposées par le contexte actuel aux prises de décision de la direction, la ligne entre la protection de la sécurité du public et la protection d'un mode de fonctionnement bien établi est devenue de plus en plus floue. En laissant de côté les préoccupations de la direction, il est difficile de voir comment il serait financièrement possible de conserver l'approche actuelle dans un avenir proche. C'est peut-être le moment qui convient pour que la Ville d'Ottawa tente de résoudre ces questions.

L'élaboration d'un règlement constitutif et de gestion définissant clairement les attentes du Conseil, un programme proactif d'évaluation des risques définissant la meilleure utilisation des ressources disponibles pour assurer la sécurité du public, des approches innovatrices pour utiliser les ressources disponibles et la révision de la structure de gestion actuelle, la conception d'un plan stratégique consolidé à long terme qui lie ensemble ces concepts et les stratégies permettront peut-être d'éliminer certaines des

contraintes actuelles à un contrôle efficace de la gestion et de réorganiser le Service des incendies pour qu'il corresponde mieux aux réalités et aux besoins actuels.

Remerciements

Nous sommes reconnaissants à la direction pour la collaboration et l'aide qu'elle a apportées à l'équipe de vérification.

Les conseils et l'aide fournis par le personnel du commissaire des incendies de l'Ontario se sont avérés particulièrement précieux pour notre analyse.

1 BACKGROUND

The audit of the Ottawa Fire Services Branch was included as part of the 2006 Audit Plan of the Office of the Auditor General, first presented to Council in December 2004

1.1 Objectives and Programs of the Ottawa Fire Services (OFS)

The overall objectives of the Ottawa Fire Services (OFS) Branch are to:

- Reduce or eliminate loss of life and property;
- Mitigate risk and deliver on the Ottawa 20/20 Plan promise to focus on prevention;
- Enhance quality of life by using best station-response model as part of the Ottawa 20/20 Plan goals outlined in the Human Services Plan; and,
- Stabilize risk to life and property in large-scale community disasters.

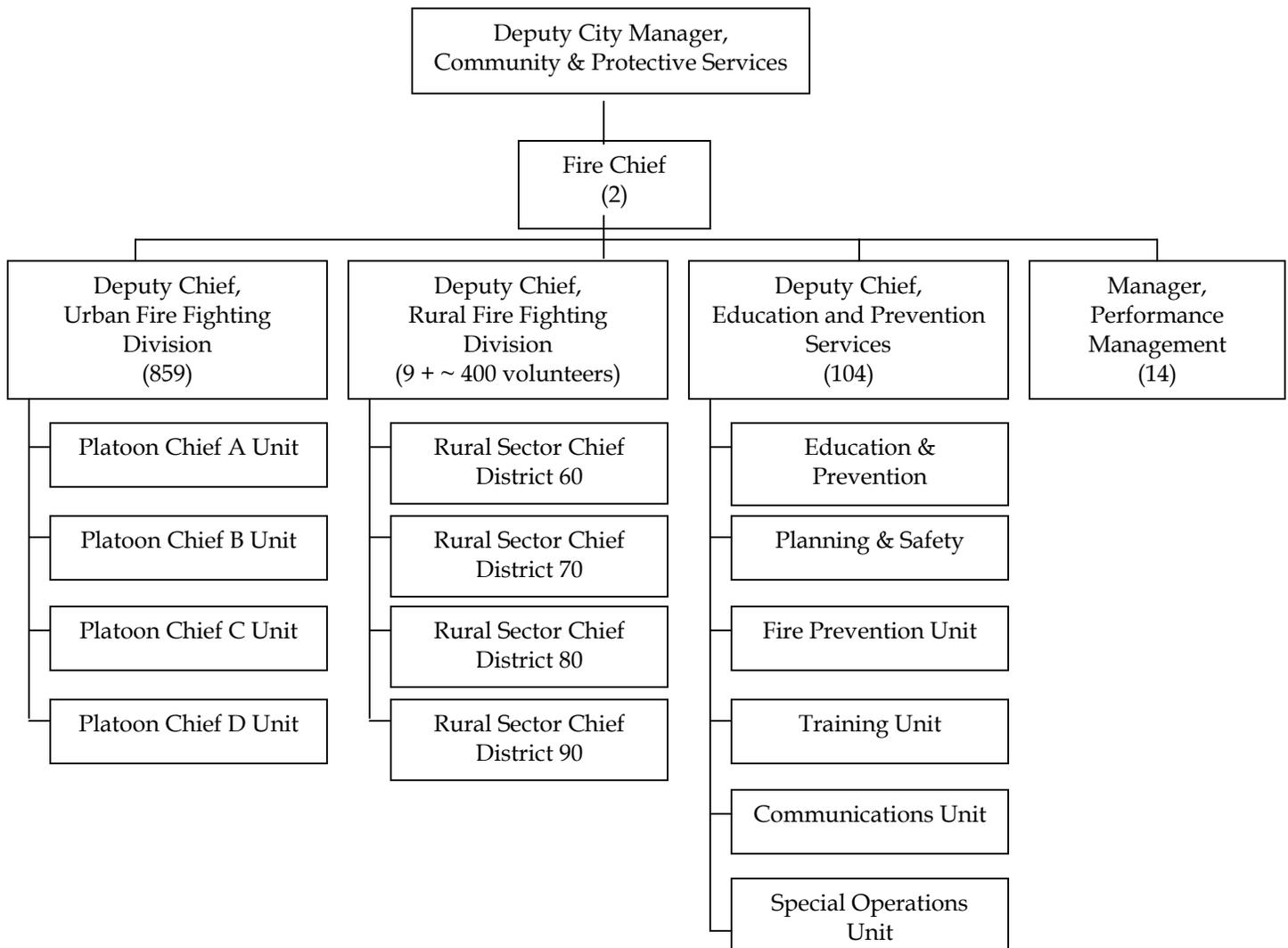
Service and programs provided by the Fire Services Branch are summarized below.

Fire Suppression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural and non-structural fires; • Rural, farm and wilderness fires; • Industrial and special-hazard fires; • Airport fires; • Marine fires; • Hazardous materials; • Nuclear/Biological/Chemical (NBC) threats; and, • Carbon monoxide calls
Rescue and Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiered response to medical calls; • Motor vehicle/equipment accidents; • Extrication from collapsed buildings, vehicles and machinery and earth cave-ins; • Confined space/high angle rescue; • Ice and water rescue; • Trench rescue; and • Urban and wilderness search and rescue
Prevention and Public Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire escape planning; • Property inspections; • Fire investigations; • Open air fire permits; • Propane safety; • Wood stove and fire place safety; and • Smoke alarm promotion

- Public Assistance
- Rural water delivery;
 - Lock outs;
 - Controlled burns
 - Heavy lifts; and
 - Downed wires
- Operational Supports
- Dispatch; and
 - Coordination with Police and Paramedic services

1.2 Organizational Structure

The overall structure of the Branch is presented below.



1.3 Resources and Budgets

The Ottawa Fire Services Branch operates 43 fire stations, located in 9 districts across the City of Ottawa. Fire Services employs 990 FTEs as well as over 400 part-time fire fighters (“volunteers”) who receive an annual stipend plus an hourly wage whenever deployed.

The 2004-2006 budgets for the OFS are presented below:

Table 1: OFS Budgets 2004-2006

By Program	2004		2005		2006	
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Adopted Budget	
	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	%
Fire Chief's Office	232	244	252	252	259	0.25
Fire Operations	77,950	77,044	80,860	81,160	85,135	81.57
Fire Program Development	6,361	6,404	7,010	7,313	7,590	7.27
Fire Operational Support	9,507	9,465	9,655	9,172	10,151	9.73
Fire Performance Management	1,130	1,054	1,249	1,162	1,230	1.18
Total Gross Expenditures	95,180	94,211	99,026	99,059	104,365	100
Client Recoveries	0	0	(7)	0	0	
Total Net Expenditures	95,180	94,211	99,019	99,059	104,365	
Total Revenues	(619)	(450)	(915)	(509)	(544)	
Net Requirement	94,561	93,761	98,104	98,550	103,821	
By Expenditure Type						
Compensation and Benefits	87,349	87,029	90,697	91,524	95,799	91.79
Material & Equipment	2,210	2,189	2,193	2,136	2,393	2.29
Fleet Costs	5,045	4,584	5,402	4,789	5,603	5.37
Other Internal Costs	576	409	734	610	570	0.55
Total Gross Expenditures	95,180	94,211	99,026	99,059	104,365	100
FTEs (excl. ~ 400 Volunteers)			988.76	988.76	990.0	

An analysis of budget variances is presented below.

Table 2: OFS Budget Variances 2004-2005

Budget to Actual	2004 Gross Expenditures (\$000)	2005 Gross Expenditures (\$000)
Budget	94,211	99,059
Actual	95,180	99,026
Surplus/(Deficit)	(969)	33

1.4 Incident Response

The following table presents the number and types of incidents responded to by the OFS for 2004 and 2005:

Table 3: OFS Call Responses 2004-2005

Response Type	2004	% of Total	2005	% of Total
Property Fires	1,235	5.12	1,354	5.37
Overpressure rupture/munitions explosion - no fire	38	0.16	12	0.05
Pre-Fire Conditions	1,610	6.67	1,636	6.49
False Fire Calls	8,036	33.30	7,947	31.54
Public Hazard	1,755	7.27	1,710	6.79
Rescue	481	1.99	502	1.99
Vehicle Accident	2,735	11.33	3,268	12.97
Medical/Resuscitator Call	6,814	28.23	7,154	28.40
Other	1,431	5.93	1,611	6.39
Total	24,135	100.00	25,194	100.00

1.5 Legislation and Regulations

The *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* (the Act) is the chief legislation governing the provision of fire services in Ontario. Provisions in the Act include:

- Municipal responsibilities for fire protection services;
- The role and authority of the Fire Marshal of Ontario;
- The authority of the Minister to establish a Fire Code;
- The rights of entry in emergencies and fire investigations;
- The requirements for fire inspections;
- Offences and enforcement authorities; and,
- Fire fighter employment and labour relations.

The *Ontario Fire Code* is a regulation made under the Act. It serves as a companion document to the *Ontario Building Code*. The Fire Code provides for the safety of occupants in existing buildings through the elimination or control of fire hazards in and around buildings, the maintenance of life safety systems in buildings, the establishing of a fire safety plan in those buildings where deemed necessary, and the retrofitting of certain occupancies.

The Fire Code is enforced by the local fire departments, which are designated as the authority having jurisdiction. The Code covers areas such as:

- fire separations;

- fire hazards;
- fire department access to buildings;
- service equipment and its maintenance;
- safety to life;
- emergency planning; and,
- scheduled maintenance of fire protection equipment.

Other sections of the Code address such topics as:

- building and occupant fire safety;
- property protection for industrial and commercial occupancies;
- flammable and combustible liquid;
- hazardous materials, processes and operations;
- fire protection equipment;
- inspection, testing and maintenance of fire emergency systems in high buildings; and,
- demolition of buildings.

Article 1.1.1.1 of the Code states that the owner of the property is responsible for carrying out the provisions of the Code. The penalties for not complying can include fines up to \$50,000 for individuals and up to \$100,000 for corporations in addition to 1-year prison terms.

A further discussion of the legislative and compliance framework for fire services in Ontario is contained in the Observations and Recommendations section of this report.

2 AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND APPROACH

2.1 Audit Objective

The Audit of the Ottawa Fire Services Branch was included as part of the 2006 Audit Plan of the Office of the Auditor General, first presented to Council in December 2004.

The objective of the audit was to review the Management Control Framework of the Fire Services Branch. The effectiveness of the Management Control Framework was reviewed to:

1. Assess what is working well and what needs to be improved, and
2. Identify recommended actions for improvement.

2.2 Audit Scope

The scope of the audit focussed on the management controls from a Branch-wide perspective that are in place to manage and administer Branch programs and services. These controls include the policies, procedures, processes, resources, systems, culture,

structure, and tasks and how effectively they support the achievement of the City's and the Branch's objectives.

Although a number of the observations and recommendations discussed below have operational implications, the audit did not include a comprehensive review of OFS operations (i.e. the effectiveness of incident response and the distribution and deployment of staff and equipment).

2.3 Approach

The audit approach included:

- multiple interviews with OFS senior management;
- interviews with OFS staff;
- several meetings and discussions with representatives for the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario (Fire Marshal);
- discussions with Legal, Labour Relations and Financial Services staff; and,
- review of legislation, regulations, policies and other relevant documentation including:
 - a. Ontario Fire Protection and Prevention Act;
 - b. Ontario Fire Code;
 - c. Ontario Police Services Act;
 - d. Ontario Ambulance Act;
 - e. Fire Marshal documentation;
 - f. Fire Statistics;
 - g. Standard Incident Reporting Framework;
 - h. Performance Measurement and Benchmarking Project;
 - i. Fire Services Standards;
 - j. Municipal Fire Protection Survey;
 - k. Comprehensive Fire Safety Effectiveness Model;
 - l. Ontario Office of the Auditor General Audit and Follow-up Audit of the Fire Marshal;
 - m. Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association;
 - n. OFS 2004-2006 budgets and expenditures;
 - o. OFS General Orders and Standard Operating Procedures;
 - p. OFS planning documents; and,
 - q. OFS official and unofficial job descriptions.

3 AUDIT CRITERIA

The audit criteria used in assessing the Management Control Framework of the OFS were adapted from the CICA's Criteria of Control model. These criteria include:

1. Are Branch objectives clearly defined, communicated and well understood?

2. Are policies established, communicated and well understood?
3. Is planning (long-term/strategic and annual) well managed?
4. Are performance measures established and monitored?
5. Are processes updated and improved based on the results of monitoring?
6. Are significant internal and external risks (and opportunities) identified, assessed and managed?
7. Is there a process for establishing human resource requirements, policies and practices, including the performance appraisal system?
8. Has authority, responsibility and accountability been defined and communicated?
9. Is information shared openly between staff?
10. Are key communication processes in place and working effectively?
11. Are the right people, skills, tools and resources identified, put in place and utilized effectively to achieve the organization's objectives?
12. Is information adequate and timely to allow performance of tasks?
13. Are information needs reassessed as requirements change?
14. Is there coordination of decisions and actions across the organization?
15. Are control activities (i.e. routines established that provide assurance that processes operate as intended and meet policy requirements) designed and documented?
16. Is the effectiveness of controls periodically assessed and communicated?

4 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Strengths

The audit of the Management Control Framework of the OFS identified a number of strengths within the Branch; areas where controls process and systems are working effectively or where progress on improvements is well underway. Key areas of strength include:

- Good progress has been made since amalgamation to standardize training requirements in order to have consistent skills sets among all fire fighters. In addition, efforts have been made to ensure consistent operating procedures are in place across all areas of the fire service.
- Interrelationships with other related City functions have improved and are in most cases strong. Communication and cooperation with the Ottawa Police Service is effective, something that is not particularly common in other cities. Regular communication takes place on emerging developments with Planning and with Building Services for specific construction. Regular post-mortems are conducted with Drinking Water Services (DWS) after fire occurrences to review the adequacy of fire supplies of water, however there is an opportunity to be more proactive with DWS by instituting an annual planning session to discuss potential issues.

- The OFS has a strong recruitment and training program in place with typically several hundred prospective recruits awaiting entry-level positions.
- The recently implemented attendance management program has made progress in reducing chronic absenteeism. Continued diligence will be required here.
- Good progress has been made in implementing a new management information system designed to support fire services. Such a system will allow for more proactive management via data analysis. Many of the key elements of the system have been launched while others are still in progress. The audit observations discussed below will address this area in more detail.
- Strategic and operational plans are in place in several areas (e.g. Fire Prevention, Communications, Training and Planning and Safety), which have identified issues to focus on in future.
- The OFS is currently at work on a comprehensive fire risk assessment of the entire City including a station location study to guide revisions to the service delivery model. It is expected that this study will more fully assess outstanding issues and opportunities stemming from amalgamation and identify potential efficiencies. Further commentary of this study and its implications for the future of the OFS is made in the detailed observations and recommendations section of this report.
- The OFS is at work pursuing improvements in its procurement practices to standardize equipment, streamline purchasing practices, build data bases on existing inventories and implement standing offers. Further opportunities remain in this regard which should be pursued.

4.2 Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

4.2.1 Establishing and Regulatory By-Law

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA or the Act) and the Ontario Fire Code are the two key legislative/regulatory documents governing the provision of fire services in Ontario. The FPPA was updated for the first time in approximately 40 years in 1997.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has developed standards in many areas of fire protection and prevention that are used as a guide to most of the operational activities of the OFS and for fire services across North America. It should be noted that these are voluntary standards, however, and are not overseen or enforced by any governing body.

Under section 2 (1) of the FPPA every municipality must:

(a) Establish a program ...which must include public education with respect to fire safety and certain components of fire prevention; and

(b) Provide such other fire protection services as it deems may be necessary in accordance with its needs and circumstances.

Under the Act, the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario is responsible “to monitor, review and advise municipalities... and to make recommendations to municipal councils for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of [fire protection services]”. The Act goes on to state that the “fire chief ...is ultimately responsible to the council of a municipality that appointed him or her for the delivery of fire protection services”.

The key tool used by the Fire Marshal in overseeing fire services across the province is the Municipal Fire Protection Information Survey (MFPIS). To ensure compliance to section 2 (1) (a) of the Act, the MFPIS requires each municipality to have:

- a simplified risk assessment;
- a smoke alarm program;
- a program for distribution of public education information; and,
- fire prevention inspections upon complaint or request.

The most recent MFPIS completed by the OFS was submitted in 2004. After reviewing the survey, the Fire Marshal deemed the Ottawa Fire Service to be in full compliance with section 2 of the Act.

OFS ‘self-initiated’ its MFPIS which is not common practice in the province; most other municipalities wait until the MFPIS is requested by the Fire Marshal. A 1998 audit and 2000 follow-up audit of the Fire Marshal’s office by the provincial auditor general identified that getting municipalities to complete the MFPIS in a timely manner remains a significant issue for the Fire Marshal. It is important to note that while municipalities are required to meet the minimum standards of the Act identified above they are not required by legislation to complete the MFPIS, which as mentioned is the key oversight tool for the Fire Marshal.

The legislation and monitoring framework for fire services is therefore much less prescriptive than for example the Police Services Act, which identifies specific policing services, which must be delivered by the police boards across Ontario. Also by comparison, the Ambulance Act, which governs the delivery of paramedic services across Ontario, establishes certification or licensing requirements for all providers of this service. In addition, given the wording and spirit of the current legislation, the oversight authority of the Fire Marshal is much less rigorous than the monitoring processes within policing (e.g. the requirement for regular provincial auditing and assessments) or within the paramedic service where oversight by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is accomplished by the requirement for providers to be re-certified on a regular basis. There is some recognition in the fire community that fire services in Ontario need to evolve to be more similar to police or paramedic services regarding mandatory standards, services and provincial oversight. Currently however, this is not the case.

The current legislative and regulatory framework implies a much greater burden on municipal councils to clearly articulate its expectations and provide for its own oversight of the fire service. Many city councils have done so via the creation of an

'establishing and regulatory by-law'. Although not required by legislation, such a by-law identifies the specific characteristics of the fire service including response times, level of public education, frequencies of fire inspections, etc. By defining these characteristics Council establishes the level of service and level of resourcing to be provided to the fire service and as such provides a clear framework within which the service will operate in the future.

A by-law for fire services remains one of the key by-laws not yet addressed by the amalgamated City of Ottawa. The former City of Ottawa was the only legacy municipality to have this in place. While technically still in force, this old by-law does not address the much more diverse aspects of providing fire services to the amalgamated City. The OFS does have internally established target response times for urban/high-density, suburban/medium density and rural areas of the City, along with NFPA standards but it is not currently operating under a Council-directed regulatory framework.

In the absence of a formal regulatory by-law, Council has never clarified its expectations regarding the types and extent of services it deems necessary to meet the specific needs of the City nor has it provided direction on how the fire service should operate. In its response to the 2004 MFPIS, the Fire Marshal recommended that such a by-law be developed at the City. As further support for this concept, the Fire Marshal has indicated that in some recent cases the courts have also expressed the need for such a by-law within Ontario municipalities in order to clearly establish the Fire Chief's authority in areas such as cross-boundary jurisdictions and the authority to allow additional structures to be damaged or destroyed at a site if necessary to contain a fire.

The Fire Marshal has developed guidelines for fire services in the province to use in the design of an effective establishing and regulatory by-law. This by-law should identify specific elements of the fire service such as:

- the reporting relationship of the Chief within the City's administrative structure;
- the number, level and affiliation of officers in addition to the Chief;
- characteristics and extent of the City's fire prevention programs and education, fire inspections and investigations including the allocation of resources to these programs;
- expected response times and performance standards (i.e. what resources will be on site and when) in the urban, suburban and rural areas;
- performance measures to be used to assess OFS effectiveness on an ongoing basis;
- any special services required such as water rescue, auto extraction, hazardous materials, chemical/biological response and search and rescue; and,
- protocols regarding responding to fires and/or emergencies outside of the municipality's limits.

For a City with diverse geography such as Ottawa, the concept of 'similar services for similar circumstance' is a guiding principle encouraged by the Fire Marshal. This implies that Council must articulate its expectations for service levels across all areas of the City. An establishing and regulatory by-law gives Council the ability to first clearly define for itself the type and levels of services expected of the fire service and second affords Council the means to oversee and monitor OFS effectiveness based on these clearly defined services. Once established, the by-law creates the context within which funding for the Fire Service can be established and allows the OFS to refine its specific operating policies, general orders and standard operating procedures. Repeal of the existing by-law still in place from the former City of Ottawa will be necessary to proceed.

Recommendation 1

That the existing regulatory by-law for fire services, carried over from the former City of Ottawa, be repealed and that the Ottawa Fire Service develop a new Establishing and Regulatory By-law for Council-approval which clearly articulates all key objectives and features of the fire service.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation and will bring forward a By-law in October 2007.

4.2.2 Cross-Boundary Agreements

In addition to an overall Establishing and Regulatory By-law, separate by-laws are recommended governing existing cross-boundary agreements with neighbouring jurisdictions. Currently OFS has such a by-law, carried over from the former township of Osgoode, for its cross-boundary agreement with North Dundas for dispatch services. Although similar agreements are in place for arrangements with Gatineau (for suppression and HAZMAT services) and with Clarence-Rockland (for dispatch services), these agreements have not been established in a by-law. Given recent court interest in establishing such by-laws in other jurisdictions, it would be prudent for the City to also establish such by-laws.

Recommendation 2

That the Ottawa Fire Services develop by-laws for Council approval governing each of the existing cross-boundary agreements with neighbouring municipalities.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Currently there is a mutual aid agreement in place with the Town of Kemptville that was in effect prior to amalgamation. There are also informal arrangements for mutual aid with the municipalities of Clarence-Rockland, Russell, North Dundas and

Lanark. Fire Services also purchases fire suppression services annually from the municipalities of Merrickville and Arnprior for those portions of the City that are closer to these centres. While a standard agreement is recommended to formalize these mutual aid services, it is not necessary to have a By-law enacted in every instance. A report approved by Council, contained recommendations that it would be sufficient for the City to enter into mutual aid agreements with specified municipalities, subject to approved terms and conditions. Again, such a report would be confirmed by a By-law at the end of Council. Ottawa Fire Services anticipates bringing these agreements forward in Q3 2007. Ottawa City Council as well as the respective Councils of the neighbouring municipalities will approve these agreements.

4.2.3 Performance Measurement

In 2002, the Office of the Fire Marshal introduced its *Performance Measurement and Benchmarking Project* to assist fire services across the province to “align their strategic directions with measurable outcomes, assess more quickly the adequacy of their strategies, and make decisions more easily with respect to the targeted allocation of resources”. The initiative was launched in part to address recommendations from the provincial auditor general that the Fire Marshal develop performance measures at both the provincial and municipal level. The Ottawa Fire Services has been actively participating in this initiative and work is continuing to design adequate, effective and meaningful measures to apply to fire services.

A second performance measurement initiative currently underway is the *Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI)*. This is a city-wide performance measurement process driven by the province and involving 15 of the largest municipalities in Ontario. The City of Ottawa has committed to OMBI as the foundation for its performance measurement initiative.

The challenge for fire services is that there is currently little coordination between the Fire Marshal’s initiative, which is focussed exclusively on fire services, and OMBI which deals with the full spectrum of municipal programs and services. Of the 15 municipalities participating in OMBI, only 7 deliver fire services and only 4 have a rural fire service.

There are concerns that OMBI may not yield the most effective performance measures for fire services and the OFS is working to better determine how OMBI and the Fire Marshal’s performance measurement and benchmarking project should be coordinated. The situation reinforces the need for Council direction via a regulatory by-law on the levels and types of services and its expectations for performance reporting. Reporting to Council is discussed in more detail in a subsequent section of this report.

Recommendation 3

That the Ottawa Fire Services, in concert with both the OMBI and Fire Marshal initiatives, develop a comprehensive set of performance measures that adequately reflect its strategic and operational objectives in order to provide adequate performance information to Council.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

As part of the Corporate Planning and Performance Reporting Office (CPPRO), performance measures were established and Fire Services has been reporting on these measures for the past year. A comprehensive set of performance measures was also established for Fire Services through the OMBI group, which are currently being reported to Council through the established OMBI reporting process. These measures include Residential Fire Related Injuries per 100,000 population (3 measures - Urban, Rural and Entire Municipality); Percentage of all Residential Fire Related Injuries in Dwellings with a Working Smoke Alarm (entire Municipality); Rate of Firefighter Injuries (entire Municipality); Residential Fire Related Fatalities per 100,000 population (3 measures - Urban, Rural and Entire Municipality); Rate of Residential Structural Fires with Losses per 1,000 households (3 measures - Urban, Rural and Entire Municipality); Rate of Commercial and Industrial Structural Fires with Losses per 1,000 properties (3 measures again); Total Fire Operating Costs per Capita (Urban Operations); Number of Incidents Responded to by Fire Services per 1,000 population (Urban); Number of Property Fires, Explosions and Alarms per 1,000 population (Urban); Number of Rescues per 1,000 population (Urban); Number of Medical Calls per 1,000 population (Urban); Number of Other Incidents per 1,000 population (Urban); Operating Costs for Fire Services per \$1,000 Assessment. The remaining reporting requirements, such as the station notification times, are subject to further implementation of modules within the Records Management System (RMS) anticipated in 2008. In addition to the prescribed OMBI measures, Fire Services agrees to provide an annual report to Council that reflect performance against strategic and operational objects as cited in Management's response to Auditor recommendation # 4 provided appropriate resources can be secured.

4.2.4 Reporting to Council

Under section 6 (3) of the Act, "the fire chief ... is ultimately responsible to the council ... for the delivery of fire protection services." Currently there is no formal mechanism at the City for Council to receive regular detailed information on the activities of the OFS. By way of comparison, within the Police Service, a 3-year business plan is required by legislation and annual activity reports are provided to Police Service Board.

The establishing and regulatory by-law recommended earlier should include the frequency and type of regular reporting to Council on OFS activities. There is a risk

that such reporting can become too detailed, focussing on a wide range of very specific operating activities. The type of reporting to Council envisioned here would focus on the strategic objectives of the Branch and provide information to Council on overall Branch performance against the established indicators discussed above.

Recommendation 4

That the Ottawa Fire Service develop an annual reporting mechanism to provide Council with regular information on overall Branch performance against objectives and performance measures, including the results of all major fire events.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Ottawa Fire Service will report annually, through Standing Committee, as directed above including updates on Branch performance and a consolidated summary of major events from the previous year in Q2 each year. In addition, Fire Services will continue to report its performance through the existing mechanisms such as the Corporate Annual Report, OMBI Annual Report and the Quarterly Performance Report to Council.

4.3 Strategic Planning and the Role of the Fire Service

4.3.1 Risk Assessment and Station Location

As indicated above, current legislation requires only that a “simplified risk assessment” be completed by each fire service in Ontario. The OFS has complied with this requirement, however, in its response to the recent MFPIS, the Fire Marshal recommended that the OFS undertake a more comprehensive risk assessment using the its *Fire Prevention Effectiveness*¹ model to better determine the needs of the community.

As an example of the limitations of the simplified risk assessment, ‘no loss’ fires are not considered yet they constitute a high percentage of total incidents. As such, an analysis of these incidents can yield valuable information on the efficiency and effectiveness of fire response as well as potential prevention initiatives.

The OFS is in the process of conducting this more comprehensive risk analysis and describes the initiative as follows:

“Additional opportunities to rationalize stations, equipment and personnel previously identified in the high-level design [from the municipal transition process] are being reviewed in a comprehensive risk assessment and station location study.... The findings

¹ The *Fire Protection Effectiveness Model* is a three-step process involving (1) needs/risk analysis; (2) selection, development and implementation of programs to address these risks; and (3) evaluation of the success of these programs in achieving the stated objectives in reducing risk.

and recommendations of this study are providing the foundation for future policy decisions by Council.”

Included in this is an examination of station locations across the City. As a result of municipal amalgamation, the OFS became a collection of diverse fire operations each of which had evolved independently to meet the needs of the legacy municipalities. Opportunities for consolidation of services have been identified in the past by the OFS and, although these were shown to be possible with no adverse effect on response times, they were rejected.

Recently a number of cities in the U.S. have undertaken similar analyses of their fire services and have identified significant opportunities for greater efficiency and savings while maintaining the required level of service (e.g. Pittsburgh and Indianapolis). The Pittsburgh study in particular (completed in 2004 by Carnegie Mellon University) contained a comprehensive approach to the analysis of station locations and response times.

We are not recommending station closures of the City of Ottawa; nor are we recommending that all existing stations remain in operation. The analysis required for that assessment requires resources and expertise that were well beyond the scope of this audit. It will be important, however, that the risk assessment and station location currently underway in the OFS be broad enough to investigate opportunities for increased efficiency and savings that have arisen as a result of eliminating boundaries that existed prior to amalgamation. In addition, once such a risk assessment is completed, the OFS should establish a process to regularly re-assess fire risk in our community.

Recommendation 5

That the Ottawa Fire Service complete the current risk assessment and station location study on a priority basis and ensure that opportunities for efficiencies are identified.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

In 2004, Council approved funding for a Station Location Study. The study is currently underway which includes a partnership between Ottawa Fire Service and the Ontario Fire Marshal's office. Part of the study includes the development of a risk assessment for the City of Ottawa based on the local available data. The final report is anticipated to be completed in Q3 2007 and will reflect opportunities for efficiencies and growth driven service requirements that are identified through the study. This report will also provide sufficient information to Council in order for them to approve emergency service response standards for the Fire Service based on the Ontario Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Guidelines.

Recommendation 6

That, once the current risk assessment and station location study is completed, the Ottawa Fire Service establish a process for regularly re-assessing fire risks in the community.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Once the risk assessment is approved by Council, Fire Services will be able to and are committed to regularly updating risks based on updates to input information (i.e., population density, building density etc.). The Public Fire Safety Guidelines (04-45-03) recommend that a municipality update their risk assessment every three years. Given the automated nature of the new risk assessment, the Ottawa Fire Service will be able to update their risk assessment regularly

4.3.2 Fire Inspections

A key aspect to ongoing risk assessment and resource planning is a program of regular inspections of facilities across the City. Such inspections help to ensure that buildings in the City comply with the Ontario Fire Code.

The Fire Code states that new and existing buildings must be built and maintained to be fire-safe. Part 9 of the Fire Code deals with the upgrade (or retrofitting) of existing buildings such as assembly occupancies, rooming houses, health-care facilities, and multi-unit residential buildings. Under the Code, retrofitting may require construction, renovations or additions. If so, the owner must submit plans, obtain necessary permits, and have all of the work approved by the local Building Code officials.

Residential buildings with two or more dwelling units must also meet the retrofit safety regulations including an electrical inspection by and subsequent approval from an electrical safety authority, inter-connected smoke alarms, fire separations and adequate exits. Of note for the City of Ottawa, federal and farm buildings (excluding residences) and foreign embassies are exempt from these regulations.

Since the introduction of these regulations, all City health-care facilities, most local rooming houses and some urban-assembly occupancies have completed the retrofit process. To date, only older high-rise apartments have been inspected and are in various stages of completing compliance with the Code.

Fire-safety inspections are typically initiated via public complaints, fire fighter-identified faults and requests from property owners. Outside of the retrofit program, OFS currently conducts inspections only as requested or as a result of complaints.

The OFS is currently in the midst of a five-year plan to re-focus its prevention program and introduce such things as regular routine inspections. Resources currently devoted to inspections are limited (i.e. eight) with most of these assigned only on a temporary basis via secondments from the Urban Fire Fighting Division. Current collective

agreement limitations on transferring staff between divisions within the fire service are also a factor in ensuring an adequate proactive inspection program is in place. An added pressure is the current backlog of required retrofit inspections of facilities where improvements were deemed necessary to meet fire code requirements.

Limited proactive inspections, particularly of such high-risk occupancies as nursing homes and long-term care facilities, hospitals, schools, day care centres and other high occupancy facilities represent a considerable risk for the community. A strategy is needed to strengthen the current inspection program.

'In-service' inspections are becoming more common with full-time fire departments. 'In-service' refers to on-duty crews doing inspections, mostly of the more simple structures such as arenas where they are highly visible and there is not a great deal to inspect. In these cases, if a problem is discovered, the crew can either issue an order or refer the case to the fire prevention section for enforcement.

Section 6 (6) of the Act allows the Fire Chief to delegate powers or duties under the sections (14, 19, 20) of the Act, which address investigations and inspections. The Chief can delegate this responsibility to any class of fire fighter.

The OFS is currently exploring the potential to utilize resources now devoted to fire fighting to enhance its inspections program although it has experienced some resistance to this. There are currently well over 800 FTEs devoted to fire fighting. In our view, the capacity exists to take on the added responsibilities of assisting with inspections.

It is recognized that additional training on the Fire Code would be required in order for these resources to effectively undertake this task. A challenge for the OFS in this regard is that it is still in the process of developing standardized and consistent skill levels among all fire fighters for core services (a carry-over from the pre-amalgamation fire services which had differing levels of skills and training). Protocols would also have to be developed for fire fighters to identify when specialized resources should be called in. Despite these challenges, an 'in-service' inspection strategy would allow for a much more proactive program to identify vulnerabilities, enhance prevention measures and thereby reduce the threat to life and property for both fire fighters and residents. The use of Fire Fighting resources to conduct inspections is therefore strongly recommended.

Recommendation 7

That the Ottawa Fire Services use fire fighter resources to conduct 'in-service' inspections in order to enhance its current inspection program.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Ottawa Fire Services will continue using fire fighting resources to conduct 'in-service inspections' in support of specific targeted programs as has been done in the past.

The current 'in-service' inspection program has focused on vulnerable communities such as elderly and the Wake-Up-Get a Working Smoke Alarm program, which has been highly successful and well received throughout the City. In the future, other programs such as barbecue inspection and kitchen inspection are also being considered as a means of promoting life safety within our community. However, to use front line fire fighting resources for Code enforcement inspections would be cost prohibitive. Extensive training from the Ontario Fire College is required before being qualified to complete Fire Code enforcement inspections. In addition, that training is required to be maintained on a regular basis, which would also result in additional training cost being incurred by the Branch.

4.3.3 Hydrant Inspections

Another key element of an effective inspection program is that of ensuring regular inspections of all fire hydrants. The Ontario Fire Code requires inspections of all hydrants on an annual basis. The Drinking Water Services (DWS) Branch within the Public Works and Services Department is currently responsible for inspection for all fire hydrants on the right-of-way. The current program results in 100% of hydrants being inspected each year and 25% of hydrants being full flow tested annually.

As a result of the Universal Program Review (UPR), responsibility for hydrant inspections at City-owned facilities was transferred from DWS to Real Property Asset Management (RPAM). Also, UPR resulted in hydrant inspections on private properties becoming the responsibility of individual property owners. Prior to UPR, all hydrants inspections for private and City-owned properties were done by DWS on a cost-recovery basis.

Because inspections by the OFS are currently limited, there is no assurance that all hydrants on private properties are being properly maintained. DWS management indicates that current hydrant maintenance resources are adequate to resume full responsibility and provide a cost-recovery program as before UPR.

Recommendation 8

That the City re-assign responsibility for all hydrant inspections to Drinking Water Services and re-instate inspections of hydrants on City and privately owned properties on a cost-recovery basis.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

This decision would expedite hydrant inspections, performed by Ottawa Fire Services, since a record of the hydrant inspection would be readily available from City records.

Private hydrant inspections on City owned land was provided on a limited basis by Drinking Water Services in the past, but it was assumed by RPAM as a result of a

Universal Program Review reduction. As a result RPAM developed a regulatory-compliant Preventive Maintenance Program that provides an effective tracking system through a database. This service is contracted out and RPAM has contractual obligations ending on December 31, 2007. RPAM recommends the decision on changing the current practice should be based on a cost-comparison analysis.

Drinking Water Services can't take on the responsibility of service without additional resources. However, if directed by Council, to take on the inspection service for hydrants on both City owned and private property, staff would first assess the level of service to these private hydrants to ensure full compliance with regulations and provide a report outlining the budget requirements, potential liability implications and preferred service delivery method. The cost for this service could be recovered on a fee for service basis, as was the case previously.

4.3.4 Fire Investigations

A program to adequately conduct investigations of all fire incidents is yet another key aspect to effective fire risk management. Such a program generates valuable data on the causes of fires and potential preventative measures that could be put in place for the future. Section 9 (2) of the Act states that the Fire Marshal has a duty "to investigate the cause, origin and circumstances of any fire or of any explosion or condition that in the opinion of the Fire Marshal might have caused a fire, explosion, loss of life or damage to property." The Fire Marshal has the latitude to decide what is investigated within the parameters above. Such investigations focus on the cause and origin of fires involving fatalities, arson, high value dollar losses and 'soft' or gaseous explosions.

The Fire Marshal can also direct fire chiefs to do certain investigations. Under the Act, each fire chief is deemed to be an "Assistant to the Fire Marshal". Section 11(2) speaks to the duty of all Assistants to the Fire Marshal to report "all fires and other matters related to fire protection services as may be specified by the Fire Marshal". Every fire department has an *Occurrence Reporting Manual* from the Fire Marshal that requests them to fill out a report that includes the cause and origin of fires.

A significant number of fire incidents are therefore not investigated as to cause. Doing so would provide valuable information in assessing risk and designing efficient and effective fire response. The OFS is currently examining all aspects of its investigation program including the potential for placing investigators on shifts vs. the current overtime/on call approach, attaching investigators to specific crews and establishing a follow-up with on-site crews as part of the investigation process. The OFS is encouraged to pursue these opportunities to make the inspection program more effective.

As mentioned earlier in the discussion of inspections, section 6 (6) of the Act allows a fire chief to delegate powers or duties under sections 14, 19, 20 which address investigations and inspections. In developing an enhanced investigation program, the

OFS should also be exploring the potential for using fire fighting resources in this area. As with inspections, additional training would be required as well as protocols for fire fighters to identify when specialized resources should be called in.

Finally, mention should be made of the high level of false alarms. As noted in the statistics presented earlier in this report, “false fire calls” represent the largest number of calls the fire service responds to. This is not uncommon among fire services generally, however, the cost to cities of responding to such calls can be significant given the level of resources deployed in each occurrence. The development of a public education program related to false alarms may be beneficial in reducing the number of such calls in the future.

Recommendation 9

That the Ottawa Fire Services pursue opportunities to enhance the investigation program including:

- (a) placing investigators on shifts vs. the current overtime/on call approach; and**
- (b) establishing a follow-up with on-site crews as part of the investigation process.**

Management Response

(a) Management is supportive of the notion to review a shift rotation model for investigators and to complete a detailed cost/benefit analysis of implementing a potential plan. However, any movement in this direction would require a memorandum of understanding to be added to the collective agreement and will require negotiation with respect to the Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters’ Association.

(b) Management agrees with the recommendation. Currently there is a follow-up between investigators and on-site crews as part of the fire investigation process.

Recommendation 10

That the Ottawa Fire Services pursue the use of Fire Fighting resources to conduct certain types of fire investigations in order to enhance the current investigation program.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation and has been implementing a solution over the past several years.

In 2002, the Fire Prevention Service Delivery Model approved by Council, included a fire investigations’ component that identified the use of fire suppression staff to complete some fire investigations as well as a recommendation to Council that Fire Services increase the number of fires thoroughly investigated.

In an effort to achieve these recommendations, the Ottawa Fire Services signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2003 with the Ontario Fire Marshal (OFM). The

agreement was to allow Ottawa Fire Services to deliver the provincial “Fire Cause Determination” course locally, resulting in a lower cost and an accelerated pace of delivery. Currently, there are approximately 260 individuals who have received various levels of the Fire Investigator’s Course allowing Ottawa Fire Service to be compliant with the legislation in that all fires are now being investigated. This allows our highly trained Fire Investigation staff to concentrate on those incidents that involve incendiary cause, which include our law enforcement partners – increasing the number of more thorough investigations. Fire Service intends to train all front-line firefighters at the basic level in the next several years.

Acquiring full investigator competencies in the front-line staff would be cost prohibitive based on the extensive multi-year training required not only through the Ontario Fire College but also the two-week course required by NFPA 921 and the Out of Country training provided by Police Services of Ontario.

Recommendation 11

That the Ottawa Fire Services pursue the development of a public education program related to false alarms.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Fire Services will be reporting back in Q4 2007 to Standing Committee after completing a follow up review of findings from comparable municipalities who have recently implemented false alarm programs to determine feasibility of a program in Ottawa.

4.3.5 Formal Incident Debriefings

A related issue to fire investigations is that of the regular post-incident debriefings that occur within the OFS after each event. Formal fire investigations, whether conducted by the OFS or the Fire Marshal, examine the cause and origin of a fire. These investigations do not therefore examine the effectiveness of a fire service’s response to the incident.

This should also be distinguished from the Standard Incident Report (SIR) requirements for each fire incident. Each fire service in Ontario is required to file an incident report with the Fire Marshal after an occurrence. The jurisdictional fire service is responsible for reporting all fires and explosions involving a building, structure, vehicle or open area and all emergency responses other than fires (including overpressure ruptures, pre-fire conditions, false fire calls, public hazards, rescues, medical/resuscitator calls and other calls) on the SIR. A copy of the SIR is filed with the originating service and the Fire Marshal. The SIR captures information such as:

- Time and location;
- Time on scene;

- Response type (personnel and equipment);
- Property classification;
- Area of origin;
- Ignition source;
- Possible cause;
- Estimated dollar loss; and,
- Building and occupancy status.

Assessments of the efficiency and effectiveness of the fire services response to an incident are therefore conducted internally by the staff who responded to the incident. Unfortunately, contrary to good management control practices, these self-assessment debriefings currently occur with no management present. It was acknowledged by all interviewed during this audit that the presence of management at these sessions would result in no productive discussion taking place. In addition, typically no formal documentation of the findings or recommendations arising from these debriefings is completed.

This approach raises concerns. Unless properly managed and facilitated, any self-assessment process can have little value in objectively analyzing issues. In addition, the quality of feedback up to senior managers within the fire service and the ability of these senior managers to provide adequate feedback to the Deputy City Manager, the City Manager and ultimately to Council on the effectiveness of OFS response to specific incidents is inherently limited with the current process.

The lack of documentation of these self-assessments means that an analysis of operational effectiveness based on an identification of trends, common occurrences and past history becomes extremely difficult. It is questionable whether the interests of public safety are best served under the current approach to these debriefings.

Formal management-led post-incident debriefings should be implemented, participation should be mandatory and operational issues and recommended changes for the future should be documented. Furthermore a standard format for these debriefings should be developed to better ensure that all substantive issues are reviewed and discussed on a consistent basis and that recommendations arising from these sessions are brought forward for decision-making.

Recommendation 12

That the Ottawa Fire Services implement a formal management-led incident debriefing process, including a standard format for discussion and documentation of all findings and recommendations and report the results on all major incidents to senior management.

Management Response

Management does not agree with the recommendation.

The current debriefing sessions for incidents are currently conducted at the appropriate operational level of the organization based on severity of the incident. The organizational structure within the Fire Services is as follows: Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief(s), Platoon Chief(s), District Chief(s), Captain, Lieutenant(s) and Firefighters. The Incident Commander at a call could be a Captain, District Chief or a Platoon Chief depending on the severity of the incident. This is the senior person at the call and is therefore, the best-positioned staff to manage a debriefing session, as they were present and participated in the call. Feedback from the debriefing sessions is then provided to the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief(s) – Management - through a variety of formal processes. The management team then provides direction on changes at a strategic level such as changes to coordination of other city services, tactics and policy and procedures necessary to address weaknesses identified through the debriefing session in an effort to ensure staff are better prepared in the future. Fire management can and do request and receive additional information that they may require on any incident in order to make necessary recommendations on improving services.

Ottawa Fire Service's debriefing process is the following :

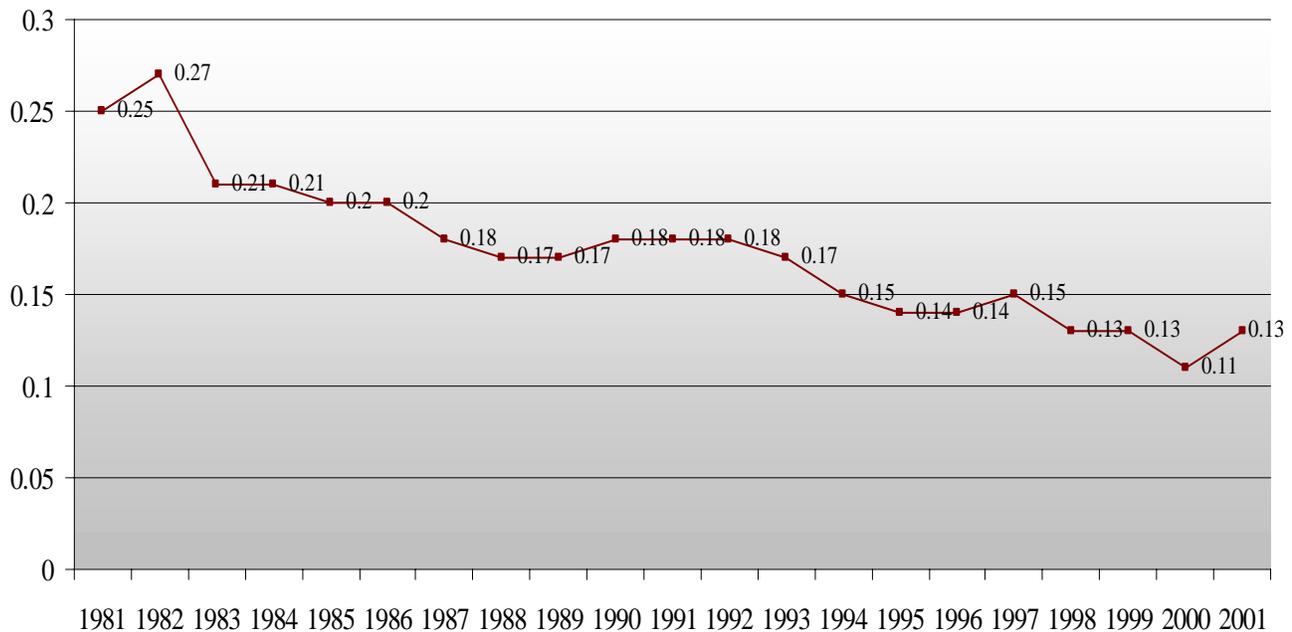
- The incident commander submits a form, which included time of incident, damage, name of injured and the apparatus that responded, to the Platoon Office which in turn signs the form and submits it to all Deputy Chiefs and the Fire Chief
- Fires of 3rd alarm (fire requiring 8 pump trucks, 3 ladder trucks, a heavy rescue truck and additional support vehicles in a hydrant area) or greater have a Deputy Fire Chief in attendance
- For all 3rd alarm fires or greater, the Platoon Chief meets with the Deputy for incident management critique
- A formal incident debriefing is held the next shift with most first response stations in attendance along with the Dispatcher that handled the call and the Investigator if available
- Recommendations from Incident Commanders on major fires are discussed at the monthly Platoon Chief/Deputy Chief meetings
- Incident report filed on major fires by Incident Commander with recommendations on equipment, response and tactics
- All Safety Officers complete a report on all "Working Fires". Any reports identifying problems or issues are submitted to the Deputy Chief of Operations for follow up and disposition.
- Issues from Incident Reports are brought forward to Health and Safety Committee, which is co-chaired by the Deputy Chief of Prevention and Training, for discussion and action. These actions are then submitted to Management Team through the Committee Co-chair for implementation.

4.3.6 Long-Range Strategic Plan and the Future Role of the Fire Service

From a broader perspective, strategic planning and risk assessment for the City’s fire services should examine the overall role of the Fire Service for the future. Traditionally, fire services in Ontario have been focussed on the number of resources dedicated to fire fighting. Clearly, there is a minimum level of such resources necessary in order to ensure public safety in the event of an incident. Furthermore, these resources must be re-assessed as the city grows and evolves.

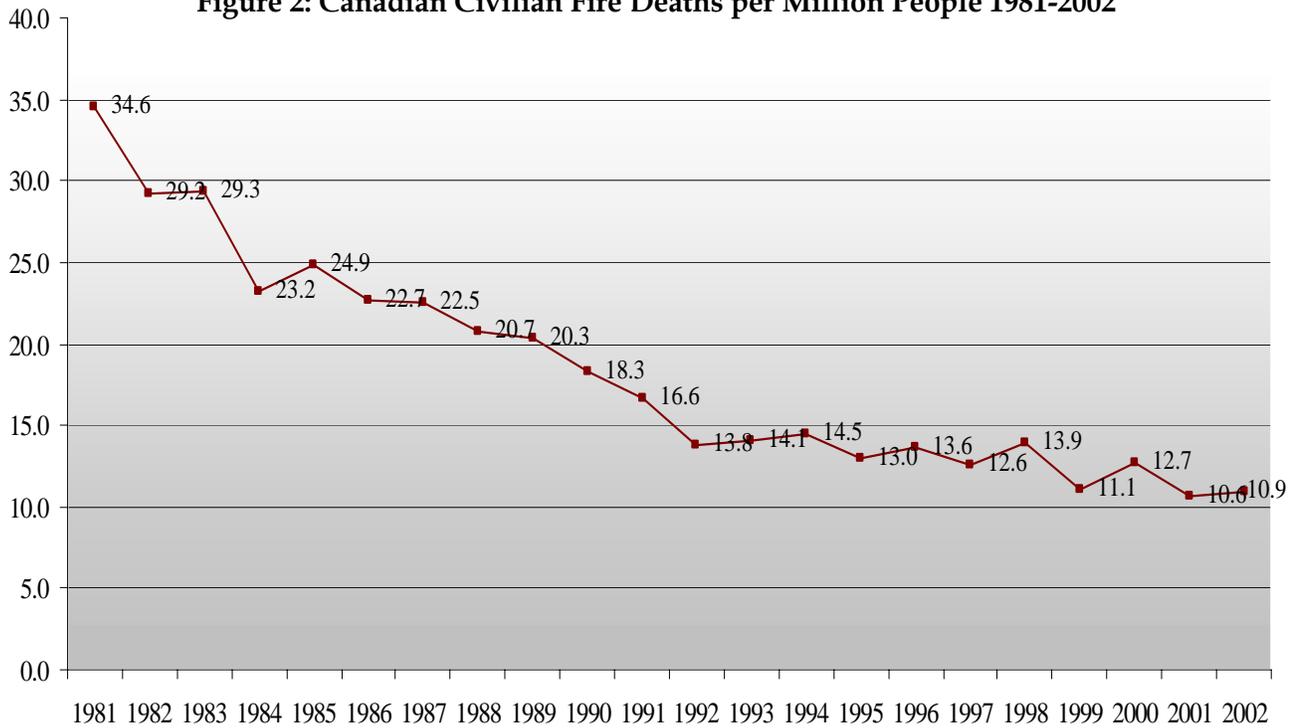
Observations raised herein should not be interpreted as suggesting that a dramatic reduction in fire fighting resources is called for at the City. However, with advances in recent years in fire response techniques, improvements in building materials and equipment, changes in construction technologies and improved city planning and building codes, the number of fire incidents and the fatalities and dollar losses associated with these incidents has been consistently decreasing in Canada. In Ontario specifically, there has been a 34% decline in fire incidents and a 30% decrease in fire fatalities since 1995. The following charts illustrate this trend.

Figure 1: Canadian Fire Loss as Percent of Gross Domestic Product 1981-2001



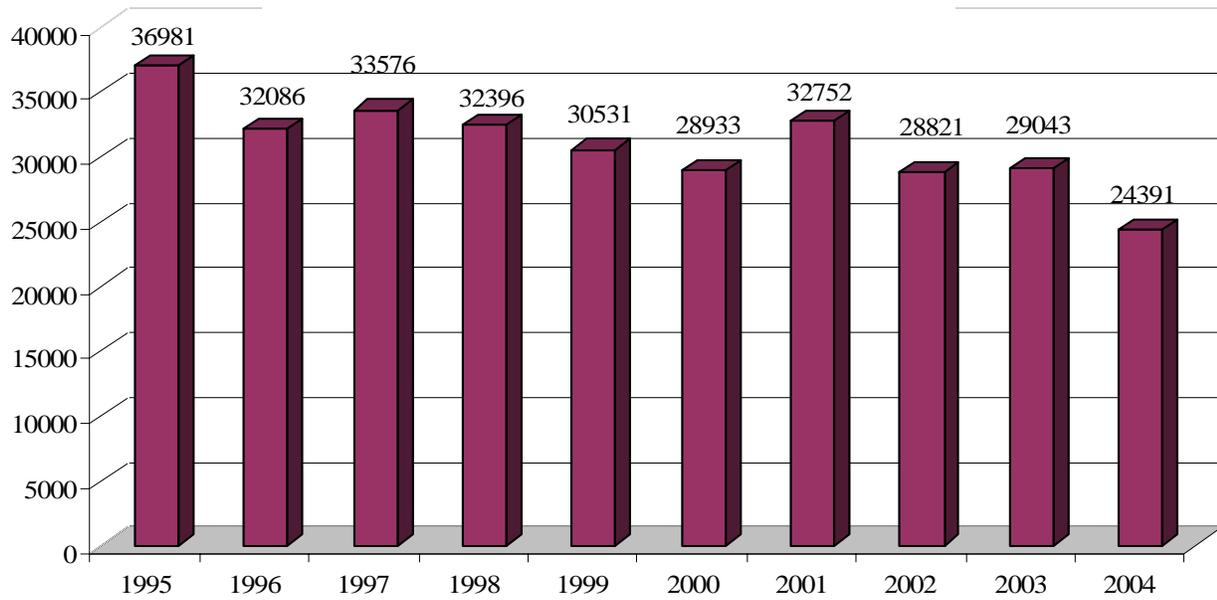
National Fire Protection Association - April 2005

Figure 2: Canadian Civilian Fire Deaths per Million People 1981-2002



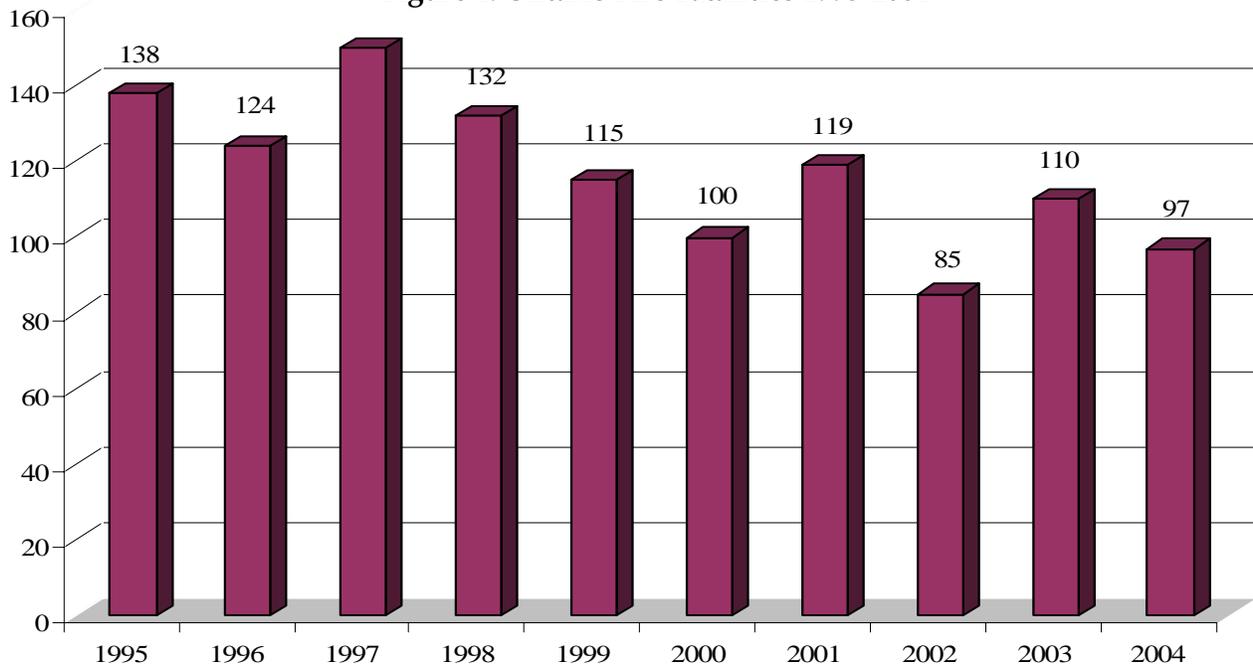
National Fire Protection Association – April 2005

Figure 3: Ontario Fires 1995-2004



Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario

Figure 4: Ontario Fire Fatalities 1995-2004



Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario

As indicated earlier, several U.S. cities have recently reviewed their fire service in order to identify efficiencies. Ten years ago, in 1996, the *Citizens Budget Committee* of the city of New York (an organization established in 1932) issued a report on the New York fire department acknowledging the need for change. Among its key observations and recommendations were:

- Less than 20% of a fire fighter's time is spent outside the fire hall;
- No efforts had been made to vary staffing levels to reflect variations in call volumes by site or time of day;
- Only 25% of all calls were to respond to fires (for 2005 at the City of Ottawa, just under 12% of all calls were for fire or 'pre-fire' conditions);
- The most frequent response is for false alarms (the same is true for the City of Ottawa where in 2005 approximately 32% of all calls were for false alarms);
- Internal resistance remains to utilizing resources for other aspects of the service (e.g. inspections and education); and
- Prevention is a much more effective and rational approach than waiting in a fire house for a call.

Opportunities to pursue the use of fire fighting resource for more proactive activities such as inspections and investigations has been discussed earlier. The development of a regulatory by-law which clearly defines the objectives and nature of the fire service, along with the risk assessment and station location study, will allow the OFS to take a more strategic and proactive approach to the design of the fire service in the future. As part of this initiative, efforts should be made to assess the types of resources, training and skills that will be required in the future to ensure public safety. Increased focus on prevention programs and initiatives and developing the required resource mix to provide these programs needs to be pursued.

The concepts of a regulatory by-law, conducting risk assessments and examining the overall role and programs provided by the fire service leads to the notion of a consolidated long-range strategic plan. The current risk assessment and station location initiative now underway in OFS represents a key first step in this exercise. A long-range fire plan is a strategic blueprint for fire protection that addresses all local needs and circumstances based upon costs the community can afford. It represents a strategy that will steer the community from where it is to where it should be. Such a plan would include:

- identification of Council approved fire protection options;
- operational impacts of the policy decisions on providing services;
- the mission statement, values and roles of the department;
- the necessary programs or projects approved by Council;
- projected expenditures that the public can afford;
- schedules for developing, implementing and maintaining appropriate services;

- a longer-term forecast (e.g. three to five years) of emerging issues and anticipated resource requirements; and,
- a process for continuously monitoring, evaluating and revising into the future.

Recommendation 13

That the Ottawa Fire Service develop a consolidated Long-Range Strategic Plan that outlines its future role and its strategy regarding the types of resources, training and skills that will be required in the future to best ensure public safety.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Ottawa Fire Services is in the initial stages of planning and has begun to develop a format and approach for the next stages for longer range planning anticipated to be complete in 2008.

4.4 Management Structure and Resources

4.4.1 Management (Union-Excluded) Positions

Organizations face significant challenges in ensuring that an effective management control framework is in place if the vast majority of its positions belong to the same bargaining unit. Such a structure makes it difficult to ensure adequate delegation of authorities and effective supervision and, when necessary, discipline of staff. The separation of union and management staff at an appropriate level in the organization is a fundamental aspect of a functional management structure.

Currently within the OFS, the only operational positions that are not part of the union are the Fire Chief, the three Deputy Chiefs and the four Rural Sector Chiefs (refer to section 1.2 of this report for the OFS organization chart). The bulk of non-unionized 'management' positions are therefore in the Rural sector whose staff (volunteers) are not unionized.

Official job descriptions are not in place below the Deputy Chief level. Unofficial job descriptions do exist for the Platoon Chief and District Chief positions, however, because these positions are part of the bargaining unit, the City has been unable to-date to put official descriptions in place with union agreement.

The key management features of the job descriptions other than for the Chief are as follows:

Deputy Chief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigning tasks, setting priorities, monitoring work schedules • Development and administration of operating and capital budgets • Approving activities including attendance, training, performance evaluations, vacation requests, scheduling changes, and transfers • Determining all hiring practices • Qualifications include university degree and management expertise
Rural Sector Chief (non-unionized)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating staff, ensuring appropriate selection and deployment of volunteers • Qualifications include education and training in supervision, HR management, labour relations and administration
Platoon Chief and District Chief (unionized, unofficial job description)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervises work activities, ensures rules, regulations, policies, procedures are upheld • Takes disciplinary action in accordance with policy • Trains, facilitates, evaluates and deals with employee and performance issues • The Platoon Chief description also includes additional responsibility for scheduling and authorizing of overtime, maintaining attendance reports and carrying out Attendance Management Program duties.

Although there clearly are management-related duties contained in the descriptions for both the Platoon and District Chief, they do not assign responsibilities for discipline and for budget management. In addition, the stated qualifications for these positions do not include education or experience in human resource management or labour relations as does the description for the Rural Sector Chief position. Finally, because these are not official job descriptions, it is unclear how enforceable these responsibilities are, making it difficult for senior managers to ensure that any assigned oversight duties are being effectively carried out.

In practical terms, it is very difficult for one member of a bargaining unit to effectively supervise and discipline another member. Under the current structure, there has been reluctance, if not an inability, to delegate supervisory and management responsibilities below the Deputy Chief level. For example, providing access to financial and budget data and granting purchasing authority below this level does not occur and as such all

procurement and budget allocation decisions, regardless of their significance come to senior levels for approval. In addition, traditionally within this environment, there has been reluctance on the part of senior unionized positions to take on supervisory and managerial duties, although there are indications that this is recognized on the part of some as an important element of the position.

An added complication in developing these positions to take on a management focus is that, even at this senior level, these positions follow the same shift schedule as the rest of the platoon. Dealing with management issues such as labour relations, procurement etc. are difficult to assign when key positions such as a Platoon Chief work only 4 times per month during the weekday. Any meetings of Platoon Chiefs therefore results in overtime being incurred.

Oversight of individual performance and managing any required discipline has been particularly problematic under the current management structure. Even ensuring that all General Orders and Standard Operating Procedures are read and signed off by all staff is difficult to enforce. One interviewee described the situation as “there is no management on-site (i.e. at the station) unless the Chief is there”.

Therefore, essentially all human resource and labour relations issues as well as all detailed operational oversight responsibilities have fallen on the four most senior positions (the Chief and Deputies). In the case of labour relations, all issues rise directly and immediately to the Deputy Chief level as it is the first non-unionized position in the Branch. In a unionized environment of over 900 staff, this requires a significant level of effort. There has been a noticeable impact on that group’s ability to focus on strategic and planning activities as a result.

Before proceeding with the analysis of management structure, we should comment at this point on the issue of corporate support to the OFS for labour relations (LR). Concerns over the adequacy of LR support were raised repeatedly during the audit. Currently, one LR Consultant provides assistance to both the OFS and the Paramedic service. Without examining the LR environment in the Paramedic service, it is apparent that, given the current LR challenges faced by the OFS, one support resource, available on a part-time basis and located off-site at City Hall, is not sufficient. The result has been a reactive approach to LR issues with limited ability to provide management with more proactive analysis and strategizing on emerging issues. The City has made significant reductions in corporate support resources over the past several years in order to reduce indirect costs. Some of these reductions may have been prudent financial decisions. In the case of LR support, it is not clear that the current level of resources is adequate. In our opinion, additional LR support for the OFS is called for.

Returning to the discussion of management structure, the challenges faced by the OFS in having such a limited number of non-union positions is a common issue among fire services across the province. Some other municipalities, however, have been successful in increasing the number of union-exempt positions. A similar situation also exists in

other areas of the City where it is not uncommon to have supervisory positions in the same bargaining unit as the staff they are responsible for managing. This issue arose in our 2006 audit of the Employment and Financial Assistance (EFA) Branch. EFA management has indicated that they are pursuing strategies to address the situation in that Branch. From the standpoint of ensuring that an effective management control framework is maintained, the current structure of the OFS is not sustainable.

Section 54 of the Act places some restrictions on a fire services' ability to increase the number of excluded positions. According to the Act, the employer does have the right to assign managerial responsibilities to existing positions, however, the Act requires that the incumbent agree. Also, section 54(8) states that the employer cannot designate more than five such positions if the service employs more than 300 positions. Key to establishing a position as having managerial responsibilities is assigning disciplinary authority. Currently within the OFS, positions below that of Deputy Chief do not have this responsibility.

The common understanding is that to address this situation will require either an arbitrator or a Labour Relations Board ruling. The City of Toronto has recently been able to add exempt/excluded positions but doing so required such a ruling.

Our analysis, however, indicates that the Act refers to designating *existing* positions as management and does not explicitly prohibit the employer from creating *additional* management positions. It would appear this may be an option. Discussions with the City's Legal Services Branch as well as with the Fire Marshal's office support the view that the Act does not prohibit the employer from altering its management structure and creating additional management positions.

There are challenges with this strategy:

- Salary room available between the Platoon Chief and Deputy Chief is very limited;
- There may be limited interest in such positions as there would be no union protection and no access to overtime or shift premiums which may actually result in a lower overall salary while taking on a more senior position.

Regardless of these challenges, the OFS should pursue the opportunity to create additional exempt positions using some of its existing vacancies to revise its management structure.

Other possible strategies to address the problems with the current structure include:

- Assigning Platoon Chiefs to non-shift regular hours so that they are available to be assigned additional managerial duties; and,
- Exchanging the existing non-unionized Rural Sector Chief positions with the existing Platoon Chief positions thereby increasing the number of true management positions in the Urban Fire Fighting Division where they are most required.

Recommendation 14

That the Ottawa Fire Service revise its management structure by creating additional managerial positions below the Deputy Chief position, utilizing existing vacancies.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation in principle.

The Ottawa Fire Services Branch agrees that additional managerial positions are required below the Deputy Chief position, however the issue is currently before an Interest Board of Arbitration regarding the Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association.

Recommendation 15

That the Ottawa Fire Service explore other potential opportunities to revise its management structure including:

- (a) Assigning Platoon Chiefs to non-shift regular hours;**
- (b) Exchanging the existing non-unionized Rural Sector Chief positions with the existing Platoon Chief positions.**

Management Response

- (a) Management disagrees with the recommendation.

The Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act prescribe the hours of work and shift rotation to be utilized in the Fire Service Suppression and Operations' Divisions. Accordingly, it would not be possible to assign these individuals to non-shift hours. To remove the position from the Platoon would require the consent of the Firefighters' Association, as it would be a collective bargaining issue. Secondly, It is important to note that the Platoon Chief is the single person in charge of each of four platoons in the 24/7 operations. They are the most senior person on duty citywide - including the rural areas, in the absence of Fire management, to provide oversight on behalf of the City. While management advocate that additional management positions are required overall per Auditor recommendation #14, the operations require oversight at the Platoon Chief level 24/7.

- (b) Management disagrees with the recommendation.

Currently Ottawa Fire Service enjoys the service of a successful Volunteer Complement of approximately 400 Firefighters. At amalgamation, after careful consideration, a decision was made to create the rural management positions as excluded from any bargaining unit. The Rural Sector Chief is a unique position that manages the recruitment, training, retention, oversight and termination of volunteer (non-unionized) firefighters. Their job is non-traditional in nature where they manage operations as well as act as a community liaison between the community

they serve and the Ottawa Fire Service. Their hours are irregular by definition with training and other work required in the evenings and weekends when the volunteers are available after traditional work hours. This particular job type does not fit within the Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association and it is appropriate that the Rural Sector Chief positions remain Management and Professional Exempt (MPE) positions.

Recommendation 16

That the City realign its Labour Relations resources in order to provide additional support to the OFS.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

LR Management agrees with the recommendation in principle, however resource constraints preclude any action being taken at this time.

4.4.2 Core Competencies and Succession Planning

Key elements of developing a workable management structure and resourcing are the need for clearly established core competencies for senior positions and designing an effective succession planning strategy. Current collective agreement provisions related to promotions places enormous importance on seniority. This is not uncommon with collective agreements in general, however, the Fire Services agreement has additional challenges.

Section 15.07 of the agreement has provisions which restrict the ability of staff to transfer between divisions of the fire service. Seniority does not follow you if you transfer. There are further restrictions on 'jumping' more than one rank as the entire promotional process is predicated on a rank-by-rank progression. The result is that officer positions are always held by the longest-serving staff who have progressed through the ranks. There is no real ability to staff on the basis of merit and in fact at times there is only one possible successor when a vacancy occurs. By comparison, recent changes in the CUPE 503 collective agreement have increased management's ability to staff on the basis of merit rather than simply seniority.

The roles, responsibilities and required skill sets for these more senior positions within the OFS have not been clearly articulated. As an example, one can be placed in a Captain's position with responsibility for the operation of an entire station, its crew and equipment with no supervisory or management experience or training.

Core competencies should be established for all officer positions. A set of required, standard skills and training should be clearly articulated for each officer level. Any employee interested in attaining these positions must meet these qualifications, which go beyond operational experience. The City offers a variety of training for supervisors and managers including *Managing in Unionized Environment, Leading Teams, Managing*

for Optimal Performance and Developing Performance Excellence. Despite the restrictions imposed by an all-union environment, it should be expected that any staff in, or aspiring to, a position of supervision complete these courses and develop the required skill sets. Making this a part of the job requirements may assist in creating a more of a merit-based promotional process.

As with many city services, the OFS is facing significant attrition issues within the next few years. Because of the focus on seniority in the promotional process, virtually all senior positions are approaching retirement age or will be soon. As a result, succession planning is emerging as a critical issue in ensuring an effective service in the future. The OFS has a decided advantage over many other city services, however, because of its continuing ability to attract a high number of recruits. As discussed, the existing collective agreement places limitations on what is possible regarding succession planning. There is an inherent disincentive to leave Fire Fighting and as such there are serious limitations on management to be creative with respect to human resource management and succession planning by identifying and grooming potential future senior officers. Establishing core competencies should assist in this regard.

Recommendation 17

That the Ottawa Fire Service develop a set of core competencies for all officer positions and incorporate these into the job requirements in order to better facilitate merit-based promotions and succession planning.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

It is important to note that the incorporation of competencies into the job requirements will require a major concession with respect to the provisions of the Collective Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters' Association - which continues to advocate promotions based on seniority rather than on merit. Consequently, in order to enhance the promotional system in this manner, a revision to the Collective Agreement is required. In the interim Fire management believes that identification of core competencies for various job types in the Branch will allow the Service to provide training around those core competencies in an effort to ensure that although staff are currently being promoted to a great extent on a seniority basis, they have acquired the skills necessary to do the job. To accomplish this recommendation, significant support and expertise from the Employee Services COE will be required.

4.5 Management Information

The OFS is currently in process of implementing a comprehensive fire management information system to support its operation. The modules of this system include:

- Incident reporting;

- Training;
- Personnel;
- Properties and Assets;
- Inspections;
- Public Education; and,
- Rural Services.

Progress has been somewhat slow due to limited resources available to coordinate the implementation (1 FTE) and there have been difficulties in ensuring efficient data transfer between the new system, the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, and the corporate geographic information system (GIS). The Branch is starting to see benefits, however, especially in regards to incident reporting and performance statistics. Access to this data has been important for the station location study now underway.

The new system is linked to the CAD in the dispatch centre. CAD transfers data on each call, capturing start/end times, type of incident, equipment and crew deployed, on-route time, injuries and dollar losses. Once the data arrives from CAD, the on-sight officer completes the report once the call has been completed and then 'locks' the report to protect the integrity of the data. There have been some instances of delays in getting data transferred over from CAD but the process appears to be working well in most cases.

The audit revealed opportunities regarding the ongoing management and use of this new system:

- Now that the incident reporting module is in place, it may be opportune to look at some of the underlying business processes to identify potential efficiencies. One example relates to the procedures for locking incident reports. Currently, the on-site officer establishes an estimate for dollar losses at the scene, enters this into the report and locks it. Not until the site has been investigated, however, are dollar losses confirmed. This new data cannot be currently captured in the system because the report is locked. Re-examining tasks such as locking/unlocking procedures and assigning reporting responsibilities more efficiently would be beneficial.
- CAD and the new fire information system are essentially two components of a single system. CAD feeds the system with fundamental data and therefore any changes made to either must be coordinated to ensure functionality is retained and data is not lost. Currently CAD is managed out of the OFS Communications Centre while the rest of the system is managed out of the Performance Measurement Branch, each at a different location. There may be advantages to combining these two functions as part of same area.
- Volunteer fire fighters are in effect part-time City employees. Each receives an annual stipend plus an hourly rate when on a call. In the implementation of the City payroll system, it was decided not to include volunteer fire fighters. As a

result, the OFS has developed a modified payroll system for these employees within its own information system. However, this system was never intended to be a payroll system and as a result provides only basic functionality. For example, pay stubs for volunteers do not contain any data other than pay amount. The volunteer payroll should be transferred to the corporate payroll system.

- The new information system in the OFS appears to be emerging as enterprise system within the Community and Protective Services (CPS) Department with the Paramedic and By-Law Services Branches also pursuing it use. Opportunities should be explored for added efficiencies and maximizing resources utilization by examining a department-wide structure and service model for this system.
- Finally, the discussion of possible synergies across CPS related to information systems leads to a broader but related issue of communications centre management across the department. Currently within CPS, the OFS, the Paramedic Service and By-Law Services each manage its own communication/dispatch function. Within OFS, 39 FTEs handle approximately 25,000 calls annually; within Paramedic Services, 78 FTEs handle approximately 90,000 calls annually; and within By-Law Services, 8 FTEs handle approximately 50,000 calls annually. Each operates out of a separate site with a separate management structure. It was of course beyond scope of this audit to examine this issue in detail, however, with all areas now utilizing the same radio/dispatch system, and with the OFS information system emerging as a common platform it is worthwhile for management to explore the possibility of consolidating communication centre operations.

Recommendation 18

That the Ottawa Fire Service:

- (a) examine the business processes related to incident reporting to ensure all information is captured as efficiently and effectively as possible;**
- (b) explore the potential to consolidate its information systems activities on a Branch-wide basis; and,**
- (c) in concert with Employee Services, integrate the Volunteer payroll with the corporate payroll system.**

Management Response

(a) Management agrees with the recommendation. Fire Services is currently undergoing a business process review related to incident reporting in an effort to improve the process for capturing information and to assist in ensuring accuracy.

(b) Management agrees with the recommendation. Ottawa Fire Service contemplates being able to achieve consolidation of information on a branch-wide basis with the full implementation of all modules within their RMS anticipated for 2009.

(c) Management agrees with the recommendation. The City is currently exploring alternate options for paying the volunteer firefighters.

Recommendation 19

That the Community and Protective Service Department explore the potential for,

(a) integrating its management information activities;

(b) consolidating its communications centre operations on a Department-wide basis.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Currently, Ottawa Fire Service has implemented five modules within their RMS: incident reporting, prevention (inspections/property module), training, personnel, and permits modules. Currently being implemented is the asset management/preventive maintenance module with early meetings beginning to look at implementing the Roster Module, which is expected to be operational within the next 24 months. With this information available, Fire Services could provide performance reporting against performance standards in addition to the reports currently being provided per the Auditor's recommendation 3 & 4. This information could be reported on a branch basis in Q1 2008.

(b) Management does not agree with the recommendation.

A consultant's report completed at amalgamation recommended that the Emergency Services consider co-locating their communication centres. However, preliminary costs for a consolidated communication centre were projected to be considerable and far outweighed the benefits the City was likely to realize. A significant benefit of consolidating a communication centre is the capability to share information. This has been achieved by the implementation of the new Fire CAD system, which is the same system that Ottawa Police use and now both services are sharing information and resources where appropriate. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) controls the Paramedic Communication Centre, although managed by the City of Ottawa, under a contract to the Province. Consequently, any changes to the Centre operations require approval by the Province. Some improvements have been made with information sharing by the limited implementation of the corporate radio system to the Paramedic Service. In addition, current technology allows for a seamless delivery of service to the citizens of Ottawa through the 911 system operated under contract by the Ottawa Police Service.

Finally, a recent benchmarking review of seven By-law Services in the Province, revealed that it is not a best practice to co-locate By-law dispatching services with other City services.

4.5.1 “Rostering” Module

The “Rostering” module is a key component of the new information system which is still being implemented. It is estimated that full implementation will take another two years. The module will allow for automated scheduling, assignments and tracking of personnel vs. the current manual process using a wall-mounted board with tags to identify each staff member and his/her location. It is anticipated that there may be some resistance to using this module and abandoning the traditional and more familiar process used now. Training will be a key aspect to successfully rolling out this new tool and ensuring it is used to its maximum efficiency.

We received feedback from several sources during the course of the audit that indicated staff scheduling is sometimes done on a punitive basis. Supporting evidence is not available to substantiate such allegations, however, there is at least the perception within the OFS that this is the case. The implementation of the rostering module will increase management’s ability to monitor staff assignment decisions and ensure that such assignments are made on an objective basis.

Recommendation 20

That the Ottawa Fire Service pursue the implementation of the Rostering module on a priority basis and ensure that adequate orientation and training is provided to staff to facilitate its acceptance and use.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

To implement the Rostering module within the RMS planned by Dec 31, 2008. In order to complete the implementation of the Rostering module, Fire Services will need to:

- Upgrade the version of RMS from 4.2 to 6.0 (estimated time to do this is 1 year - IT resources are required for this) as FDM is currently only releasing Rostering in version 6.0.
- Hire a project and consultant team to train staff and resolve the issues. A work plan is currently being drafted.
- A dedicated FTE is required to manage on an ongoing basis.

5 CONCLUSION

The OFS is proceeding in a number of areas to enhance efficiency and improve operations. Training requirements have been standardized and common operating procedures established. In addition, the undertaking of a comprehensive risk assessment and station location study and the implementation of a new management information system are two of the major initiatives currently underway.

There remain areas for the further attention, however. The current management structure and many of the existing collective agreement provisions place significant barriers to ensuring an effective management control framework is in place within the OFS. The minimal number of management positions, a culture that discourages effective communication between unionized staff and managers and a promotional process that effectively prevents selecting candidates on the basis of merit has had significant implications on ensuring effective delegation of authority, staff supervision and oversight, assignment of resources, succession planning and performance monitoring.

With the serious restrictions imposed by the current environment on managerial decision-making, the line between protecting public safety and protecting an established way of operating has become increasingly blurred. Leaving aside managerial concerns, it is difficult to see how sustaining the current approach is financially feasible in the near future. It is perhaps an opportune time for the City of Ottawa to attempt to address these issues.

The development of a regulatory by-law that clearly sets out Council's expectations; a proactive risk assessment program that determines the best use of available resources to ensure public safety; creative approaches to using existing resources and to revising the current management structure; and the design of a consolidated Long-Range Strategic Plan that ties these concepts and strategies together, may make it possible to remove some of the current constraints to effective management control and to recast the fire service to more appropriately reflect current realities and requirements.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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