



CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Hamilton Fire Department

TO:	Chair and Members Healthy and Safe Communities Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	May 19, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Occupational Health Exposure Program Service Provider (CES15027(a)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Trevor Haalstra (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7120
SUBMITTED BY:	David Cunliffe Chief, Hamilton Fire Department Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That, the Occupational Health and Exposure Program established in December of 1997 be extended for a further 25 years to 2047;
- (b) That Council approve the single source procurement, pursuant to Procurement Policy #11 – Non-competitive Procurements, for occupational health and exposure screening services with Occupational Health Care-A-Van Inc. for a 5-year term ending November 30, 2027: and,
- (c) That the General Manager, Healthy and Safe Communities Department or their designate be authorized and directed to negotiate and execute an extension to the Contract and any ancillary documents required to give effect thereto in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1997, Hamilton City Council committed to funding a 25-year Occupational Health and Exposure program (OHEP) for Hamilton Firefighters. This program was a joint initiative between the City of Hamilton, the Hamilton Fire Department (HFD) and the Hamilton Professional Firefighters Association (HPFFA) (Report CES15027). This year marks the 25th year of the program and it is the Hamilton Fire Department's recommendation that

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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this program be granted a further 25-year extension to continue monitoring the health and wellness of HFD staff.

Occupational health screening is a critical tool to provide base line health markers and then alert HFD personnel to health-related issues so they can get access to care and improve and maintain a high quality of life.

Members of the HFD may be called to any number of hazardous settings or incidents. It is impossible to predict all the hazards a firefighter or support staff member can encounter in their day to day role and over the course of their careers.

Through the commitment of the people that now form Occupational Health Care-A-Van, the Department has been able to maintain, facilitate and deliver a service that has exceeded our expectations and has earned the trust and confidence of the personnel of the HFD. The key to high quality health care and occupational health screening is professional, reliable, consistent delivery. Occupational Health Care-A-Van has met this high standard continuously over the last 25 years and is why today the recommendation is to continue utilizing this service provider by offering a 5-year contract extension.

It is the intent of the Hamilton Fire Department to revisit the contract every 5 years for evaluation.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 6

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: This program is funded through the Hamilton Fire Department's annual operating budget. The 2022 approved funding is \$210,300.

Staffing: N/A

Legal: Legal will be engaged to execute a contract with the vendor upon Council approval.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On July 9, 1997, a polyvinylchloride plastics fire broke out on an industrial site in Hamilton's North End, releasing dioxin, benzenes, chlorobenzenes and other toxic chemicals into the air and water as it burned for four days. In the following weeks, a survey was conducted by the Hamilton Professional Firefighters Association (HPFFA) that showed 86% of all firefighters who were involved in Plastimet had reported some health effects, more than 45 firefighters lost time from work and 160 sought medical attention.

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Following the Plastimet fire, the HPFFA, with assistance from a doctor of the International Association of Firefighters and the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers – Hamilton clinic (OHCOW), developed a proposal for a, program of evaluation, of the work-related health of its members.

In October 1997, Hamilton City Council approved the proposal for an Occupational Health and Exposure Program (OHEP). A steering committee was formed which included representatives of the HPFFA, the Hamilton Fire Department (HFD) and the City of Hamilton.

The McMaster University Occupational and Environmental Health Clinic in partnership with OHCOW were awarded a contract to provide the services for the OHEP program. Under that agreement OHCOW had the responsibility for the group analysis of the data collected by the McMaster Clinic (questionnaires, interviews, medical exams and lab tests).

Today the entire program is facilitated by the staff of Occupational Health Care-A-Van an inclusive Occupational Health Monitoring Service capable of providing the following: Certified Occupational Medicine Physician, Certified Spirometry Technician, Certified Occupational Hearing Conservationist, Audiometric Technician, ECG Technician, Phlebotomy/Lab Technician.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

By-Law 21-215 Procurement Policy, Policy # 11 Non-Competitive Procurements

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

In order to ensure adherence to corporate policies and identify the best approach to this process the Manager of Procurement and Manager of Finance and Administration for Health and Safe Communities Department have reviewed the Report and support the recommendations.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The HFD is committed to helping and supporting its members which consist of both firefighters and support staff identify potential health conditions, recover their health, return to work and move forward with their lives with dignity.

The members of the HFD face severe physical and psychological demands and are also at risk of chronic or delayed adverse job-related health consequences. Firefighters are exposed to a variety of contaminants, some that are suspected or known to cause cancer. Some carcinogens include asbestos, benzene, diesel exhaust and solar

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radiation. Firefighters are at increased risk of cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, cancer and noise-induced hearing loss.

Cancer is the leading cause of death among Canadian firefighters representing 86% of all fatal claims. Traumatic injuries account for 90% of all time-loss claims. Mental health related claims have risen dramatically in recent years and is now the second top cause of time-loss claims in Canada.

In a study of 30,000 firefighters, data indicates that a firefighter is 9% more likely to develop cancer during their lives and a 14% higher probability of subsequently dying from cancer than the general public.

The Occupational Health and Exposure Program supported by Hamilton City Council for 25 years, facilitated by Occupational Health Care-A-Van, has been instrumental in monitoring employee health to ensure that upon early detection of all adverse health conditions employees of the HFD can get access to the high standard of care our province provides.

With an approved extension of the program for an additional 25 years, both current and future employees can continue providing a professional service model while facing higher than average occupational hazards with the confidence that their health and wellness are the highest priority. Additionally, a 5-year contract extension to the current service provider Occupational Health Care-A-Van will give the HFD and staff the confidence that this program can continue seamlessly and efficiently and to the highest professional standard.

The HFD has established, over many years, a strong professional relationship with Occupational Health Care-A-Van and their Occupational Health physician, nurses and lab personnel. The knowledge gained from this program is being applied to protect the health and well-being of the members of the HFD by increasing their awareness and understanding of occupational health issues. This program has also resulted in the early detection of exposure problems related to occupational illness and disease thus increasing the likelihood of more positive outcomes.

Occupational Health Care-A-Van has been flexible and adaptive to the needs of the HFD. They understand the unique challenges that can occur when working with an emergency service and are able to handle last minute changes at the clinic. If required, they can come to the stations and facilities when necessary in order to provide their services at different hours of the day to all HFD divisions without an increase in costs.

Occupational Health Care-A-Van has been proven to be both adaptable and flexible, demonstrated by a seamless, safe program delivery while navigating the challenges, policies and health guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. This regard for safe

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professional delivery while being cost effective is the highest standard the HFD expects from a vendor and Occupational Health Care-A-Van has met that standard consistently over 25 years.

The objective of the OHEP program is to monitor and detect any changes in a firefighter's health so that the appropriate action can be taken to safeguard their health and well-being. The program is designed to accomplish this by its commitment:

- a) To monitor the effects of exposure to biological, physical and chemical agents to detect changes in an individual's health that may be related to harmful working conditions;
- b) To detect any patterns in the work force that might indicate underlying work-related problems;
- c) To provide the worker with information about the individual's occupational hazards and current health;
- d) To make participants aware of the relevance of the prescribed clinical tests beforehand including the possible interpretations of "false positives" or "non-occupational positives";
- e) To address occupational exposure/health related stress;
- f) To provide information to the relevant parties (i.e. Joint Health and Safety Committee) to assist them in identifying and recognizing the conditions and exposures that the fire department personnel experience so that appropriate steps can be taken to prevent further exposure that may result in occupational disease and injury;
- g) Provision of a confidential process which gathers and uses medical information from the participants;
- h) To track the health of fire department personnel exposed by the Plastimet fire as well as all other fire department personnel;
- i) To generally carry out the objectives of the mission statement of the OHEP program; and,
- j) To endeavour to assist in the improvement of the health and safety of the fire service in general.

The benefits of maintaining a relationship with Occupational Health Care-A-Van include the following:

- Occupational Health Care-A-Van staff have established and maintained 25 years of sensitive and confidential medical history for HFD participants thus developing a high degree of mutual trust between the providers and participants of the program.
- Occupational Health Care-A-Van has delivered flexible, safe, consistent professional service catering to the needs of the program delivered to upwards of 800 employees over the 25-year span.

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- Occupational Health Care-A-Van's physician has fostered a consistent, personal and compassionate individual relationship with the participants.
- Occupational Health Care-A-Van maintains a relationship with staff that are affiliated with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. (OHCOW), which is comprised of health professionals: nurses, hygienists, ergonomists and physicians that identify work-related illness and injuries, promote awareness of health and safety issues and develop prevention strategies.
- Research and academic partnerships (such as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board [WSIB]) may allow for the development and enhancement of the program and allow others to learn from OHEP initiatives.

Occupational Health Care-A-Van will continue to deliver the following medical components:

- Laboratory tests including blood analysis, glucose, cholesterol and urine testing;
- Pulmonary Function tests;
- Cardiovascular Assessment;
- Chest X-ray;
- Audiometric Screening;
- Individual Medical Exam;
- Patient/Physician Interview;
- Medical and Occupational History including workplace exposure records, vaccinations, and biological exposure incidents;
- Individual Review and Analysis; and,
- Medical Results: individual results, comparisons and trends.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

An alternative for consideration is that the HFD develops a Request for Proposal (RFP), which may result in a different vendor being selected as the service provider. Market research will indicate that other entities exist that could provide a variation of Occupational Health Monitoring.

It is felt that this process may erode the existing program quality as it would mean that a new working relationship with the participants and the Health Care Professionals that deliver this program would have to be redeveloped. Changing vendors may have a negative effect on the level of confidence the members of the HPFFA have in the program. It is important to note that the current OHEP program has been in place for 25 years and the physician-patient relationship that has been mutually fostered is one of the keys to the program's acceptance and success.

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The timeliness of permitting this program to continue with the current vendor is crucial given the fact that the data collection is annually scheduled each year from September until the end of April.

Financial Implications: This program has an existing operating budget. Budget increases may be sought that are commensurate with any increases of the inherent costs (physician [OMA driven], lab fees, facilitation fees) to deliver the program. Included as an additional driver in this potential increase is the high level of participation of current as well as retired members of the Department, as the pool of participants increases so do the associated costs. The impetus for this increase would occur regardless of the vendor choice and, as such, should not negatively reflect on the current vendor.

Selecting a new vendor may have the potential for increased costs.

Staffing Implications: N/A

Legal Implications: N/A

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Healthy and Safe Communities

We all have access to the services and supports we need to be healthy and active. Hamilton is a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy and have a high quality of life.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None