



CLOSED REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: **Langley City Fire Rescue Service Review**

File #: [Required]

Doc #:

From: Scott Kennedy
Fire Chief

Date: March 20, 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT City Council receive the March 24, 2025 Closed Report to Council from the Fire Chief regarding the Langley City Fire Rescue Service Review for information.
2. THAT the March 24, 2025 Closed Report to Council from the Fire Chief regarding the Langley City Fire Rescue Service Review and the "Executive Summary" and "Summary of Recommendations" sections of the Langley City Fire Rescue Service Review be publicly released.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the report is to present the Langley City Fire Rescue Service Review to City Council.

POLICY:

Not applicable

COMMENTS/ANALYSIS:

Background:

In 2024, Langley City Fire Rescue Service (LCFRS) retained Tim Pley & Associates (TPA) to undertake a service review of Langley City Fire Rescue Service (LCFRS), with the intention that the report and its recommendations will support LCFRS in

developing an evidence-based strategic work plan that guides the operations of LCFRS over the next five to ten years.

Department Overview:

The LCFRS utilizes a composite service delivery model to provide the following services:

- Fire Suppression – authorized at the Full-Service Operations level under the Provincial Training Standards, and wildland firefighting.
- Medical – the Department responds to all call types within the BCEHS Clinical Response Model and is trained and qualified for the following services: First Responder Level III with AED, CPR, and Naloxone therapy endorsements;
- Rescue – includes vehicle extrication and technical rope rescue (tower crane);
- Fire Prevention Program – includes fire inspections, fire investigations, plan checking, and pre-fire planning programs.
- Public Education Program; and
- Disaster Planning – Emergency Preparedness Program.

Staffing:

The Department is led by the Fire Chief, with the support of a Deputy Fire Chief (to be filled March 31, 2025), an Assistant Fire Chief (filled January 2025), an Administrative Assistant, and a Fire Administration Assistant.

As of December 31, 2023, there were 26 career suppression firefighters (five Captains and 21 firefighters), one career Fire Prevention Officer, with a second Fire prevention Officer to be hired in the spring of 2025, and 13 Paid on Call (POC) firefighters¹.

The LCFRS oversees the City's Emergency Preparedness program, which is resourced with one Emergency Management Program Advisor, one part-time Emergency Planning Assistant, and 16 emergency program volunteers.

Career Staffing – Suppression:

When fully staffed the career suppression division is deployed as follows:

- Four firefighters on the engine 24/7/365 (minimum staffing).
- A minimum of two firefighters, maximum of four firefighters on the Squad fifty percent (50%) of the time.

¹ [update staffing level to end of 2024]

Currently the department is in process to hire four more firefighters to be on truck by early summer 2025 that will increase the career staffing from 25 to 30- firefighters This will provide a two-apparatus response 24/7/365.

The on-duty staffing numbers listed above represent staffing in ideal conditions and do not include vacation and sick or injury leave, or the historical availability of off-duty career staff or POC members.

Paid-On-Call Staffing:

As of December 31, 2023, the Department has a total of roster 14 POC members.

Not all POC firefighters have achieved the Department's target qualification levels for a POC member. Of the 13 POC firefighters, 8 are currently not qualified to be assigned to interior firefighting operations and therefore can only provide exterior support.

During discussions with the Department's officers, it was reported that POC firefighter attendance during the daytime on weekdays is lower than in the evenings and on weekends – an experience shared by many departments within the province that rely on POC or volunteer members. However, in some respects POC firefighter attendance within the LCFRS was observed to be better than within many fire departments across province. Department records indicate between 2018 and Sept 30, 2022, on average the yearly percentage of "no shows" for POC callouts was only 1 to 2%, indicating that there was a POC firefighter response to almost all page outs within that period.

In 2023, the POC members:

- Attended 657 incidents.
- Attended 1.8 calls per 24-hour period.
- On average, 4.8 members attended when paged out.
- On average, each POC call out incident lasted for 0.85 hours.

Fire Prevention Staffing:

As of the end of 2023, the Department had one Prevention Officer (Captain) working in the Prevention Division. Council has approved an additional staff person for the Prevention Division for 2024. Currently the department is recruiting for this second Fire Prevention Officer position

Summary of Recommendations

The Operational Review completed by Tim Pley & Associates made a total of forty-two (42) recommendations which are divided into three categories based on implementation priorities:

- **Short term:** implementation period is one that ideally should be achieved within 24 months
- **Medium term:** implementation period is one that ideally should be achieved in three to five years
- **Long term:** implementation period is expected to take more than five years

Outlined below is a list of each recommendation and subsequent staff response related to how it is, or will be addressed by the department.

1. *A staff resource should be assigned to participate with the Citizen Assembly on Community Safety Committee. Short term*

The Fire Chief has been assigned to this committee.

2. *Recommendations in the 2024 Fire Services Review report should be utilized as a foundation for the development of an evidence-based Strategic Work Plan for the LCFRS. Short term*

The department will work, as part of the 2025 Business Plan, toward the development of a longer-term Strategic Work Plan for the department. The 2024 Fire Service Review recommendations can be used as part of the foundation for the development of this plan.

3. *In conjunction with the RCMP, Transit Police, BC Ambulance, Bylaw Enforcement, and other City departments, the Department should develop an emergency response plan for the imminent SkyTrain project for both the construction phase as well as after the anticipated in-service date of 2028. Medium term*

Currently the Fire Chief sits on three (3) separate SkyTrain committees including The SkyTrain Project- Fire Life Safety Committee. The department will work to develop an emergency response plan for the SkyTrain through discussions with other regional fire services and work with other emergency response agencies starting in late 2025 or early 2026.

4. *In collaboration with social service agencies, the Department should participate in a coordinated cross-agency response to support the needs of vulnerable and*

unsheltered individuals, and individuals experiencing mental health crises. Medium term

Currently the department meets with the Gateway of Hope staff on a regular basis to discuss various issues. This also includes extreme weather events that may or may not involve Emergency Planning. As noted in recommendation #1, the department also has a representative on the Citizen Assembly on Community Safety Committee.

5. *Where appropriate the LCFRS should support the City's Integrated Holistic Approach to Community Safety initiative to advocate senior levels of government to shift from crisis and emergency response to early intervention and prevention programs. Medium term*

The department does most of its advocating to senior levels of government through fire service associations. These associations include the BC Fire Chief Association, the BC Fire Prevention Officers, and the BC Fire training Officers Association. The Fire Department, and the Emergency Management division of the fire department, continue to work at a local level in public education and Community Risk Reduction Strategies for the citizens and residents of the City of Langley.

6. *The LCFRS should assign a staff resource to support local community leaders and stakeholder groups with their unhoused initiatives. Short term*

As noted in recommendation #1 and #4, the department does currently work with the Gateway of Hope and associated stakeholders.

7. *A minimum staffing level of six on-duty firefighters 24/7/365 should be initiated in 2025. Short term*

A targeted staffing level of six on-duty 24/7/365 is not currently achievable without considerable use of overtime, and even then, would likely not be sustainable due to limitations in the number of overtime shifts personnel are willing or able to work.

LCFRS currently has two of the four shifts staffed with (8) firefighters operating (2) staffed apparatus. Current recruiting will result in the other two shifts to be staffed with (7) firefighters operating (2) staffed apparatus by June 2025.

8. *The City and the LCFRS should take steps to be able to access, through improved mutual or automatic aid arrangements, or by a service agreement, at least seven qualified firefighters to provide surge capacity during major incidents or concurrent emergency events. Medium term*

LCFRS has a mutual aid agreement throughout the GVRD (Metro Vancouver) for covering costs. LCFRS participates in mutual aid practices with the Township of Langley Fire Department and the City of Surrey Fire Department for Mutual Aid response to major events and emergencies. The department also uses a callback system to call back off duty career firefighters in the event of a major incident or concurrent emergency events. The department continues to work with the POC firefighters to upgrade and increase their qualification level.

9. *The LCFRS should take steps to improve the turnout of POC firefighters for incidents, as described in the 2024 LCFRS Review Report. Short term*

The department has recently completed a remuneration assessment of the POCs and increased remuneration effective January 2025. The department will organize a recruitment process for POC firefighters in the fall of 2025

10. *The City and LCFRS should establish a reporting mechanism and relevant criteria to identify when the current staffing model requires review and updating. Short term*

The department currently reviews the staffing model on an annual basis to determine staffing needs. Current relevant criteria includes, but is not limited to, call volume.

11. *The LCFRS should target the ability to deploy 20 firefighters, 90% of the time to medium hazard incidents. Medium term*

The department currently utilizes its POC firefighters to supplement initial response, followed by career callback and mutual aid request from the Township of Langley or City of Surrey if required.

12. *The LCFRS should establish a practice of initiating mutual aid response for all confirmed structure fires short term*

The department has an “as required” practice of initiating a mutual aid response, along with a career call back response for all confirmed structure fires. Chief Officers are notified immediately of all confirmed structure fires and can request mutual aid and/or career callback to attend. Initial responding crews can request additional resources as required.

13. *The LCFRS should enter into discussions with one or both neighboring communities, with a goal of establishing an automatic aid agreement or service agreement for all working fires in the City, and for some other call types such as technical rescues. Medium term*

LCFRS has had discussions with both neighboring communities about establishing mutual and automatic aid. As we have limited staffing resources it would be challenging for LCFRS to consistently provide automatic aid to neighboring communities without the commitment of another neighboring community to provide coverage. A move up system such as, if LCFRS is assisting Surrey, then Township of Langley would need to cover for Langley City, and if LCFRS was assisting the Township of Langley, then Surrey would cover Langley City. At the time of discussion, the Township of Langley was not ready to do this.

Other options are fee for service, but this was not discussed at the time and would have an applicable cost associated with it.

14. *The LCFRS should consider innovation in terms of recruitment and retention of POC firefighters and consider the use of existing programs such as the Fire Marshal Office of the Northwest Territories tool kit as well as the CAFC Answer the Call program. Short term*

These programs have not currently been explored by LCFRS. The POC system has regional challenges to find and keep POC firefighters. What works in an area such as the Northwest Territories may or may not work in the Metro Vancouver area. Currently there is an increased demand for career firefighters in the region, and POC firefighters that are interested in becoming full-time firefighters are quickly recruited by career departments. The commitment and availability of the “historical” POC firefighter has changed and is less reliable and consistent than in years past.

15. *On an annual or other frequency basis, the LCFRS should review the MESA calls for service and call types to which the Department responds. The LCFRS should report annually on this matter to Council. Short term*

LCFRS has provided several reports to Council over the years on Medical Emergency Service Alarm (MESA) calls and response protocols. The demand for MESA service continues to increase as the BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) continues to deal with their staffing and response challenges. Changes by neighboring departments to their response model for MESA calls have resulted in BCEHS changing their coding system to include more calls in higher acuity categories. Currently the department response to Purple, Red, and Orange, as well as lower acuity categories if BCEHS is delayed over 10 minutes. LCFRS also responds to several “lift assist calls” that are non-medical related.

16. *The city and the LCFRS should consider taking stronger measures to reduce the number of alarm activations where no fire is found. The LCFRS should report annually on this matter to Council. Short term*

LCFRS does currently work with building owners and property managers proactively through our inspection/education program on the importance of building life and fire safety systems. Where premises are found to have frequent incidents of alarm activation where fire is not found, the department first uses a proactive education process with the building owner/manager/resident. If this approach does not result in reduced alarm activations, then a fee system is in place to help achieve compliance. Although a fee system is in place for the department to use, the department does not want to discourage early alarm notification to the department. The goal of the department is to provide education on the importance of a working and properly functioning fire and life safety system(s).

- 17. The LCFRS should take the necessary steps to ensure that call types are recorded correctly within the Department's records management system. Short term*

The department has a process for reviewing all incident reports to ensure proper coding is completed by the reporting officers. This process is facilitated by the Chief Officer(s) of the department for all incident reports.

- 18. The LCFRS should implement measures to reduce the number of lift assist calls at senior care facilities. Short term*

The department did address these rising calls for service by discontinuing the practice of responding direct to public request for service on "lift assists". A call for lift assist service must now be directed through BCEHS, before crews respond. BCEHS still downloads many of these types of calls for service to LCFRS, and BCEHS will respond if required (when available, lower acuity calls). Although these calls do take department resources to answer, generally they do not take a lot of time to deal with and can be put on hold in the event a higher priority call for service is received, **before** patient contact is made by our crews. The potential challenge with these calls for service is when they become more than a "lift assist" as an underlying or previously unreported medical issue is determined by attending crews. When this happens, there is potential for long delays as BCEHS may be delayed in upgrading the response to this call, as a first responder is determined to be on site. In these cases, when a long delay is possible, the department will try and send a POC crew (if available) to standby with the patient, and free up the career crew to be available for higher acuity incidents.

- 19. The City and the LCFRS should consider a targeted public education program aimed at reducing the number of nuisance and/or miscellaneous incidents, including burning complaints. The LCFRS should report annually on this matter to Council. Medium term*

The department does not report these types of calls specifically, to Council, but rather as a component of the overall list of calls the department responds to. Over the past year there has been a significant increase in nuisance fires and/or miscellaneous incidents/ burning complaints largely due to the increase in “warming fires” in the downtown area. When these fires do occur, be it in the downtown area as a warm fire or back yard firepit, the crews do use public education by providing the residents with information about the ban on outdoor burning of any type in the City of Langley.

- 20. Through education and/or increased enforcement, steps should be taken to reduce the frequency of container fires. Short term*

The department, during regular inspections work to educate business owners and residents about the importance of placement and securing of dumpsters in and around their businesses or residences (multifamily). Other education opportunities occur when there has been an incident(s) involving a business or residence in the area. In these cases, crews and/or the Fire Prevention Officer will talk to, or notify by email or hand delivered letter, a reminder about the importance of proper placement and securing of garbage/recycling containers. This concern is also highlighted with all new construction in requesting secured garbage/recycling areas to reduce the opportunity for unauthorized access to these areas.

- 21. Through education and/or increased enforcement, steps should be taken to reduce the frequency of brush and grass fires. Short term*

This situation is like the one noted in recommendation #20. Several of these types of fires can be attributed to “campfires” that may have become out of control, or left unattended and were observed and reported to the department. In each case if someone is present when the department arrives there is an educational component that goes along with the extinguishment of the fire.

- 22. The LCFRS should develop and maintain response standards that are adjusted over the course of implementing the proposed staffing plan. Medium/Long term*

As part of the Operational Guideline (OG) review process, OGs are reviewed and updated to align with current staffing resources. Dispatch protocols are also updated and adjusted as staffing levels change.

- 23. The LCFRS should review calls for service across all categories and steps should be taken to reduce calls for service. Short term*

LCFRS reviews calls for service on at least an annual basis. Education and Prevention measures are the greatest tool the department has in reducing the number of calls for service where the department has influence. Areas of calls for service such as MESA calls, the department has little to no influence as these calls are directed through another agency, in this case BCEHS. LCFRS can review if they are able to continue providing these services, (ie:MESA) but as noted before, when other fire departments have reduced service levels to MESA calls this often results in BCEHS reclassifying a number of incident type calls to a higher acuity.

24. The LCFRS should take steps to improve the recording of training records. Short term

LCFRS has installed a new software program to better track training records. This process is ongoing as the department moves to a different system. The department has also been made aware of the potential for change of provider from Surrey Fire Services for our current Records Management System, which may also influence our training records management.

25. A gap analysis should be undertaken to assess the completeness and currency of all Operational Guidelines. Short term

This process was started in 2022 by the Deput Chief at that time, but not completed. The process will now be addressed once again, now that the position of Deputy Fire Chief is filled.

26. The LCFRS should address any deficiencies in Operational Guidelines identified in the gap analysis. Medium term

This process was started in 2022 by the Deputy Chief at the time but not completed. The process will now be addressed by the new Deputy Fire Chief.

27. The LCFRS training program should be reviewed for alignment with their mutual aid partner departments to ensure operational effectiveness and safety. Medium term

LCFRS has in the past, and continues, to work with Township of Langley on joint training opportunities. LCFRS has also completed some training opportunities with Surrey Fire Department, and is continuing to pursue these opportunities with Surrey specifically around SkyTrain training.

28. *The City should review the suite of services provided the LCFRS, and the levels to which those services are mandated to be provided and give consideration to any required changes. Short term*

LCFRS continues to provide a number of emergency and non-emergency services to the community. These include fire suppression, MESA, Rescue, Fire and Life Safety Inspection, and Education and Emergency Planning

29. *All personnel operating Department apparatus should be trained to the NFPA 1002 at EVD/EVO level. Medium term*

LCFRS ensures that all career fire staff are trained and certified at NFPA 1002 EVD/EVO level.

POC staff are not certified to this level as there is a significant time and cost investment associated with this certification as well as on-going maintenance training. POC firefighters are provided with in-house driver/pump operator training but not necessarily certified at NFPA 1002 levels.

30. *The LCFRS should engage a third-party provider to develop pre-fire plans that can then be maintained by the Department and used to support training and operation. Medium term*

The department currently uses inspection and Preplan software to facilitate crews conducting and completing department Preplans. Although this process may be slower than hiring a third-party provider, by utilizing this model, the crews are more familiar with buildings and safety systems within the City of Langley through the process of developing and maintaining the building Preplans.

31. *LCFRS should consider issuing information to the property owners with a list of common deficiencies found during inspections. Short term*

Currently the department provides information on how to prepare for a Fire Safety Inspection via an informational pamphlet to all business licence applicants. The department is reviewing and considering posting this information on the City of Langley website for property owners to access anytime.

32. *The LCFRS should identify buildings which are complex or present a significant risk and determine as a matter of policy that interior operations will not be conducted in those buildings by firefighters not qualified at NFPA 1001 level II. Short term*

The department has a practice of identifying firefighter by qualification using labels on their helmets, and accountability tags. This allows the Chief Officers or Incident Commanders to quickly identify which firefighters on scene would be able to conduct interior operations in any structure. The training goal of the department is to get all firefighters up to a level of NFPA 1001 Level II.

32. *The City should review its HRVA program annually and make the necessary adjustments to ensure that the program is continually moving forward with its intended objectives. Short term*

The department had started an HRVA review in 2022/2023, but this was not completed due to personnel changes in both the fire Department and the Emergency Program. There is also a current proposal in the GVRD to develop a regional Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability. Analysis (HRVA) assessment. The department will work toward completing an HRVA assessment in 2025 for the City, and/or, as part of the regional assessment.

33. *On an annual basis, the LCFRS should establish annual goals and objectives for the City's emergency preparedness program. The LCFRS should annually report the activities and past performance of the City's emergency preparedness program to Council. Annually*

This process was started in 2024 as part of the annual Business Plan for the Fire Department and will continue on an annual basis.

34. *When Bylaw No. 2784 is updated (perhaps in response to the Fire Safety Act coming into force), the issues identified in the 2024 Fire Service Review report should be taken into consideration. Short/Medium term*

As the Fire Safety Act has now been passed, a review of Bylaw No. 2784 can now take place. A review of issues identified in the 2024 Fire Service will be considered when conducting the review of the Bylaw for 2025/2026.

35. *With the passage of the new Emergency and Disaster Management Act, the City's emergency program bylaw will need to be reviewed against the new statute and updated accordingly. Short term*

A review of the City's Emergency Program bylaw has been completed, and a draft against the new statute completed. This will be presented to Council in 2025.

36. *When the Fire Safety Act comes into force, the Fire Chief should be assigned with the responsibility of determining who and how the LCFRS will undertake fire investigations within the city. Term based on FSA implementation*

As the Fire Safety Act has now been implemented, and departments have until July 2025 to complete this, the new Deputy Fire Chief, a former employee of the Office of the Fire Commissioners Office, will be working with the Fire Chief to determine who and how the LCFRS will undertake fire investigations within the City.

37. *When the Fire Safety Act is in force, the Fire Chief should be assigned with the responsibility of determining who and how fire investigation training, as prescribed within the Act, will be conducted. Term based on FSA implementation*

As the Fire Safety Act has now been implemented, and departments have until July 2025 to complete this, the new Deputy Fire Chief, a former employee of the Office of the Fire Commissioners Office, will be working with the Fire Chief to determine who and how the LCFRS will undertake fire investigation training within the City.

38. *When the Fire Safety Act is in force, the Fire Chief should be assigned with the responsibility of determining who and how the LCFRS will undertake fire inspections within the City. Term based on FSA implementation*

As the Fire Safety Act has now been implemented, and departments have until July 2025 to complete this, the new Deputy Fire Chief, a former employee of the Office of the Fire Commissioners Office, will be working with the Fire Chief to determine who and how the LCFRS will undertake fire inspections within the City.

40. *When the Fire Safety Act is in force, the Fire Chief should be assigned with the responsibility of determining who and how fire inspections training, as prescribed within the Act, will be conducted
Term based on FSA implementation*

As the Fire Safety Act has now been implemented, and departments have until July 2025 to complete this, the new Deputy Fire Chief, a former employee of the Office of the Fire Commissioners Office, will be working with the Fire Chief to determine who and how the LCFRS will undertake fire inspection training within the City.

41. *When the Fire Safety Act is in force, the LCFRS should ensure that the suppression officers as well as the suppression firefighters are trained to the standards and qualifications required within the Act to conduct company fire inspections. Term based on FSA implementation*

As the Fire Safety Act has now been implemented, the new Deputy Fire Chief, a former employee of the Office of the Fire Commissioners Office, will be working with the Fire Chief to ensure that LCFRS suppression officers, as well as the suppression firefighters, are trained to the standards and qualifications required within the Act to conduct company fire inspections.

42. *The LCFRS' OH&S program and practices should be reviewed for compliance with the WorkSafe BC Act and Regulations.*

The LCFRS' Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) program and practices are regularly review by the City's OH&S Officer, as a member of the joint committee. In January of 2024 the department, along with other City departments, was reviewed to ensure compliance with the new First Aid requirements. The department was found to be in compliance with these requirements.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

Budget to support the recommendations, if warranted and necessary, outlined in the Langley City Fire Rescue Service Review will be included in future years' Financial Plan for Council consideration and deliberation.

ALTERNATIVES:

None provided.

Respectfully Submitted,



Scott Kennedy
Fire Chief

Attachment:

1. Langley City Fire Rescue Service Review Report

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS:

I support the recommendation.



Francis Cheung, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer



Langley City Fire Rescue Service Review

Prepared for:

Scott Kennedy

Fire Chief

Langley City Fire Rescue Service

Prepared by:

Tim Pley & Associates Ltd.

June 12, 2024

1. Executive Summary

Tim Pley and Associates Ltd. (“TPA” or the “Consultants”) were retained by the City of Langley (the “City”) to undertake a review of Langley City Fire Rescue Service (the “Department” or “LCFRS”). The review is intended to underpin the development by the Department of a comprehensive strategic plan later in 2024. It is expected that this report and its recommendations will support the Department in developing an evidence-based strategic work plan that guides the operations of LCFRS over the next five to ten years.

Project work leading to the development of this report included a review of a range of background documents, materials and data provided by LCFRS, including development plans, as well as other documents accessed independently by the Consultants, a review of fire protection service delivery challenges, an on-site review of Department equipment, apparatus, and firehall, as well as in-person engagements with the Department’s chief officers. Input from the chiefs is summarized in this report and is reflected in the recommendations.

The City is located in the south eastern part of Metro Vancouver. It had a census population of some 28,955 in 2021, and covers an area of only 10.2 square kilometers, making it the sixth most densely populated municipality in the province. The City serves as the commercial and economic center for a broader surrounding area. As a central hub, the City has been negatively impacted by a significant population of unhoused residents and the impact of illicit drug use. These issues have presented material challenges for LCFRS as well as other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and property owners in the downtown core area.

In some respects, to report on the current and future fire protection needs in the City, is to relate a tale of two cities. On the one hand, the Department is challenged by many of the same matters that affect other urban fire departments: a considerable and upward trending number of calls for service, largely related to pre-hospital care,¹ societal changes related to work/life balance that reduce the availability of paid-on-call (“POC”) and off-duty career firefighters, regulatory changes that add administrative workload, and further impact the effectiveness of the POC/career composite model.

Community growth plans will further challenge the Department. The planned extension of the SkyTrain rapid transit system into the City is expected to be a catalyst for transformational change, including accelerating population growth, further densification and possibly taller buildings, all of which will impact the Department’s current service delivery model.

On the other hand, the compact nature of the City enables the Department to provide excellent response coverage across the entire City footprint from its one fire hall that is well-located to serve the community today and into the foreseeable future. The Department is on track to being

¹ This report uses the acronyms MESA (Medical Emergency Service Assistance) and FMR (First Medical Responder) synonymously to refer to calls for service that are related to pre-hospital medical care. These call types involve the Department responding to medical incidents in support of the provincial BC Ambulance Service.

well-resourced with fire apparatus and personnel, having already approved additional staffing for 2025 and replacement of an engine along with adding a two-person squad unit to its response fleet. The City is within a fire protection resource-rich environment, which provides the potential for the sharing of fire protection resources across municipal boundaries. Some similar-sized communities in BC do not enjoy the same opportunities.

The Department's operational practices were found to reflect long-established procedures that have likely adapted incrementally over time in response to external change drivers, in what could be considered a reactive manner. This is not uncommon in the fire sector, and in fact, this has been an effective method of providing the consistent and reliable service that fire departments are known for. However, the rapidity and scope of changes in recent years have resulted in fire departments more commonly finding themselves overwhelmed, as incremental operational changes cannot adequately address the fundamental change-drivers of homelessness, illicit substance use, climate change, and societal changes, all of which are layered over the more traditional and predictable change-drivers to which fire departments are accustomed to managing.

One chief officer aptly framed the current situation as "the Department needing to think outside of the box that we built for ourselves."

Self-constructed "boxes" within which the Department continues to struggle include the practice of responding to a wide range of pre-hospital medical calls for service (66.8% of the Department's call volume in 2023), while doing so is negatively impacting training, fire inspections, and POC firefighter responses to page-outs. Furthermore, the Department continues to dispatch its chief officers during and after business hours to calls of relatively minor nature, causing the chief officers to be immersed in response operations and therefore less able to engage in strategic leadership endeavours. Lastly, the Department has struggled with data management, which has resulted in a lack of reliable data required for reviews like this project and the Department's strategic plan development, and upon which chief officers should be able to rely when making strategic decisions.

This report provides insight into the factors that are currently challenging the Department, and the ones that can be expected to affect it over the next several years. The City's prior approved initiative to increase staffing within the Department will help to bolster the Fire Prevention Division, where minimum requirements are not currently being met, as well as enabling an on-duty suppression strength of six, the recommended minimum level for the Department. The City and the Department will need to monitor development in the community and be prepared to further increase on-duty career staffing if high risk structures, including high-rise buildings, are added to the City's building stock.

While the Department is on track to meet its target minimum on-duty staffing level of six in 2025, this report outlines a deficiency in the overall number of qualified firefighters that the Department needs to deploy, and identifies options for closing that gap. One key approach could involve making better use of the Department's POC firefighters. This matter likely will not be resolved if old methods continue to be applied. If the composite model of service delivery is to continue, and POC firefighters are to be relied upon to augment on-duty career firefighters, the

Department will need to apply a fundamentally different approach to the matter. This report outlines what that approach might look like.

Alternatives to an improved use of the Department's POC firefighters include the hiring of more career firefighters to increase the on-duty crew strength, and/or engaging firefighter resources from one or two neighbouring communities through a combination of one or more mutual or automatic aid arrangements, or service agreements, to provide reliable, enhanced response support. There are pros, cons, and hurdles related to all staffing options that are explored in this report.

The City has recently embarked upon developing its own Emergency Management program and intends to continue to manage this program within the Department. That relatively new direction is in its infancy, and the City has committed resources that appear appropriate to the task.

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* ("EDMA"), recently adopted by the Province, will inform, and shape the work of the new Emergency Management program. The EDMA requires local governments to apply the Sendai model to their emergency plans and requires that local governments engage and coordinate their planning with First Nations and neighbouring local governments.

The theme of regional and sub-regional approaches to emergency management, response to climate change, wildfire, and other matters that cross municipal boundaries is likely to continue to be reflected in Provincial legislation and encouraged by the Province through grant funding programs. That theme is echoed in this report in terms of the potential for the City to bolster fire protection service while managing costs, if it can achieve a functional and reliable sub-regional response model.

The Department, while facing some emerging challenges, is well positioned to move past those challenges, if an adjusted strategic work plan is implemented. This report includes recommendations for that new direction.

Nothing in this report should be construed as legal advice.

All stakeholders are encouraged to retain independent legal counsel where such action is warranted. The City should review any recommendations or issues identified below through its ordinary legal review processes.

2. Summary of Recommendations

The following section summarizes the recommendations contained within the report. These recommendations include a recommended implementation priority.

A “short term” implementation period is one that ideally should be achieved within 24 months, a “medium term” implementation period is one that ideally should be achieved in three to five years, and a “long term” implementation period is expected to take more than five years.

	Recommendation	Timeline or Trigger
1.	A staff resource should be assigned to participate with the Citizen Assembly on Community Safety Committee.	Short term
2.	Recommendations in the 2024 Fire Services Review report should be utilized as a foundation for development of an evidence-based Strategic Work Plan for the LCFRS.	Short term
3.	In conjunction with the RCMP, Transit Police, BC Ambulance, Bylaw Enforcement, and other City departments, the Department should develop an emergency response plan for the imminent SkyTrain project for both the construction phase as well as after the anticipated in-service date of 2028.	Medium term
4.	In collaboration with social service agencies, the Department should participate in a coordinated cross-agency response to support the needs of vulnerable and unsheltered individuals, and individuals experiencing mental health crises.	Medium term
5.	Where appropriate the LCFRS should support the City’s Integrated Holistic Approach to Community Safety initiative to advocate to senior levels of government to shift from crisis and emergency response to early intervention and prevention programs.	Medium term
6.	The LCFRS should assign a staff resource to support local community leaders and stakeholder groups with their unhoused initiatives.	Short term
7.	A minimum staffing level of six on-duty firefighters 24/7/365 should be initiated in 2025.	Short term
8.	The City and the LCFRS should take steps to be able to access, through improved mutual or automatic aid arrangements, or by a service agreement, at least seven	Medium term

	Recommendation	Timeline or Trigger
	qualified firefighters to provide surge capacity during major incidents or concurrent emergency events.	
9.	The LCFRS should take steps to improve the turnout of POC firefighters for incidents, as described in the 2024 LCFRS Review Report.	Short term
10.	The City and the LCFRS should establish a reporting mechanism and relevant criteria to identify when the current staffing model requires review and updating.	Short term
11.	The LCFRS should target the ability to deploy 20 firefighters, 90% of the time to medium hazard incidents.	Medium term
12.	The LCFRS should establish a practice of initiating mutual aid response for all confirmed structure fires	Short term
13.	The LCFRS should enter into discussions with one or both neighbouring communities, with a goal of establishing and automatic aid agreement or service agreement for all working fires in the City, and for some other call types such as technical rescues.	Medium term
14.	The LCFRS should consider innovation in terms of recruitment and retention of POC firefighters, and consider the use of existing programs such as the Fire Marshal Office of the North West Territories tool kit as well as the CAFC Answer the Call program.	Short term
15.	On an annual or other frequency basis, the LCFRS should review the MESA calls for service and call types to which the Department responds. The LCFRS should report annually on this matter to Council.	Short term
16.	The City and the LCFRS should consider taking stronger measures to reduce the number of alarm activations where no fire is found. The LCFRS should report annually on this matter to Council	Short term
17.	The LCFRS should take the necessary steps to ensure that call types are recoded correctly within the Department's records management system.	Short term
18.	The LCFRS should implement measures to reduce the number of lift assist calls at senior care facilities.	Short term
19.	The City and the LCFRS should consider a targeted public education program aimed at reducing the number of	Medium term

	Recommendation	Timeline or Trigger
	nuisance and/or miscellaneous incidents, including burning complaints. The LCFRS should report annually on this matter to Council.	
20.	Through education and/or increased enforcement, steps should be taken to reduce the frequency of container fires.	Short term
21.	Through education and/or increased enforcement, steps should be taken to reduce the frequency of brush and grass fires.	Short term
22.	The LCFRS should develop and maintain response standards, that are adjusted over the course of implementing the proposed staffing plan.	Medium/Long term
23.	The LCFRS should review calls for service across all category types and steps should be taken to reduce calls for service.	Short term
24.	The LCFRS should take steps to improve the recording of training records.	Short term
25.	A gap analysis should be undertaken to assess the completeness and currency of all Operational Guidelines.	Short term
26.	The LCFRS should address any deficiencies in Operational Guidelines identified in the gap analysis.	Medium term
27.	The LCFRS training program should be reviewed for alignment with their mutual aid partner departments to ensure operational effectiveness and safety	Medium term
28.	The City should review the suite of services provided the LCFRS, and the levels to which those services are mandated to be provided, and give consideration to any required changes.	Short term
29.	All personnel operating Department apparatus should be trained to the NFPA 1002 at EVD/EVO level.	Medium term
30.	The LCFRS should engage a third-party provider to develop pre-fire plans that can then be maintained by the Department and used to support training and operation	Medium term
31.	The LCFRS should consider issuing information to the property owners with a list of common deficiencies found during inspections.	Short term

	Recommendation	Timeline or Trigger
32.	The LCFRS should identify buildings which are complex or present a significant risk and determine as a matter of policy that interior operations will not be conducted in those buildings by firefighters not qualified at NFPA 1001 level II.	Short term
33.	The City should review its HRVA program annually and make the necessary adjustments to ensure that the program is continually moving forward with its intended objectives.	Short term
34.	On an annual basis, the LCFRS should establish annual goals and objectives for the City's emergency preparedness program. The LCFRS should annually report the activities and past performance of the City's emergency preparedness program to Council.	Annually
35.	When Bylaw No. 2784 is updated (perhaps in response to the <i>Fire Safety Act</i> coming into force), the issues identified in the 2024 Fire Service Review report should be taken into consideration.	Short/Medium term
36.	With the passage of the new <i>Emergency and Disaster Management Act</i> , the City's emergency program bylaw will need to be reviewed against the new statute and updated accordingly.	Short term
37.	When the <i>Fire Safety Act</i> comes into force, the Fire Chief should be assigned with the responsibility of determining who and how the LCFRS will undertake fire investigations within the City.	Term based on FSA implementation
38.	When the <i>Fire Safety Act</i> is in force, the Fire Chief should be assigned with the responsibility of determining who and how fire investigation training, as prescribed within the <i>Act</i> , will be conducted.	Term based on FSA implementation
39.	When the <i>Fire Safety Act</i> is in force, the Fire Chief should be assigned with the responsibility of determining who and how the LCFRS will undertake fire inspections within the City.	Term based on FSA implementation
40.	When the <i>Fire Safety Act</i> is in force, the Fire Chief should be assigned with the responsibility of determining who and how fire inspections training, as prescribed within the <i>Act</i> , will be conducted	Term based on FSA implementation

Recommendation		Timeline or Trigger
41.	When the <i>Fire Safety Act</i> is in force, the LCFRS should ensure that the suppression officers as well as the suppression firefighters are trained to the standards and qualifications required within the Act to conduct company fire inspections.	Term based on FSA implementation
42.	The LCFRS' OH&S program and practices should be reviewed for compliance with the WorkSafe BC Act and Regulations.	Short term