



The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

Review of Municipal Fire Services

OR

A Vision for Future Fire and Emergency
Service

KEY MESSAGES

1. Emergency response is the most ineffective and expensive way of protecting the public, but it continues to be the primary protection choice of most fire departments
2. Robust data is a requirement for good decision making yet it is mostly unavailable and overlooked in the fire services
3. Fire departments often over-respond to incidents and don't use data to determine ways to establish more efficient response criteria
4. Public protection by fire services in the United Counties can be delivered more effectively and for a lower cost than within the present model
5. Transitioning to a more efficient and effective model of public protection is a marathon not a sprint. Change takes place over time

1. Emergency response is the most ineffective and expensive way of protecting the public but it continues to be the primary protection choice of most fire departments.

2 Minutes

33 Minutes, 20 Seconds

7 Minutes, 46 Seconds

5 Minutes, 53 Seconds

TOTAL: 15 Minutes, 39 Seconds to > 40 Minutes

3 - 4 Minutes

2. Robust data is a requirement for good decision making yet it is mostly unavailable and overlooked in the fire services

- NFPA 1710
- NFPA 1720
- OFM 10 in 10
- Fire Underwriters Survey
- Add fire stations
- Add career staff or more volunteers
- “GET THERE FASTER”

2. Robust data is a requirement for good decision making yet it is mostly unavailable and overlooked in the fire services

- Fire departments report to council
 - The number of calls responded to
 - Number of trucks dispatched
 - Average response time
- Sometimes
 - Time of first truck arrival
 - Type of calls
 - Number of firefighters
- Rarely Reported
 - What services were performed at the incident?
 - Number of firefighters and how long before they arrived (assembly time)
 - Value of property saved; value of service provided
 - Cost per call

2. Robust data is a requirement for good decision making yet it is mostly unavailable and overlooked in the fire services

- Outcome, for example:
 - False alarm, departed scene within minutes
 - Extinguished fire
 - Total loss but protected other properties
 - Response to medical call; no assistance necessary
 - Response to medical call; performed CPR
 - Response to MVC; extricated victims
 - Response to MVC; acted as highway blockers
 - Response to MVC; cleaned roadway

2. Robust data is a requirement for good decision making yet it is mostly unavailable and overlooked in the fire services

- Incident cause
 - Knowing the frequency of incidents by type, day, time of day, cause, outcome, & other factors allows decisions to be made on objective data rather than number of incidents and speed of response
- Determining the cause of an incident should provide information for prevention and education activities to mitigate similar future occurrences
- Good data, including outcome data, enables objective probability – impact analysis (commonly known as risk) and informs response policy and resource management

3. Fire departments often over-respond to incidents and don't use data to determine more efficient ways to establish response criteria.

- Some fire departments in Leeds and Grenville send two or more fire trucks, with lights and sirens, to alarm calls
 - The majority of alarm calls – almost every one – turn out to be false
 - There are fire departments in the province that send one fire truck to an alarm incident with a second following at the speed limit without lights or sirens – that practice has been going on for more than 20 years
- Police and EMS have gotten into the habit of calling fire for most motor vehicle collisions even though the need for extrication occurs in fewer than 5% of incidents
- EMS, with the encouragement of fire departments, call for fire response to medical incidents even though fewer than 5% of EMS incidents are life-threatening

3. Fire departments often over-respond to incidents and don't use data to determine more efficient ways to establish response criteria.

- Research indicates that there is greater risk to the public from 20 tonne fire trucks responding to incidents where they aren't required, than there is to a victim
- The use of outcome data would reveal whether there is a need to reconsider response to medical calls, automatic alarms, MVCs, and other non-fire events
- The use of outcome data combined with objective decision making would enable improved human and physical management of fire department assets

4. Public protection by fire services in the United Counties can be delivered more effectively and for a lower cost than within the present model.

What's it going to take?

1. A decision by municipalities to move to a better model
2. Hiring a strong leader – executive / change manager for the fire service with a demonstrated commitment to decisions based on data and fact
3. A statistician – because fact-based decision making isn't possible without someone who understands how to gather and use data
4. An operational team that understands the value and psychology of firefighters and how to prepare them to cope with long periods of inactivity and infrequent emergency responses

5. Transitioning to a more efficient and effective model of public protection is a marathon not a sprint. Change takes place over time.

A more efficient and effective model of public protection is to move to a prevention and education strategy

That will take

a central, counties wide-strategy to accomplish at the lowest cost and within the current overall fire services budget

A leader who has demonstrated change success

5. Transitioning to a more efficient and effective model of public protection is a marathon not a sprint. Change takes place over time.

Opponents of the transformation will suggest that similar changes – fire department amalgamations – have cost millions and have not been successful

examine the circumstances before accepting these statements

There will be suggestions that the cost of buying the same equipment for all fire stations, rebranding (shoulder patches, vehicle crests, compensation) will cost millions

- Those changes can take place over many years and as part of normal equipment purchase cycles

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The report makes 23 main recommendations and many more sub recommendations. The most important is the first step in the marathon

That the counties and municipalities implement a task force comprising several Chief Administrative Officers and fire chiefs, some financial officers, and possibly citizen representatives to pursue the recommendations within the report.

The role of the task force would be to examine report details, operational issues, implementation challenges, and how the recommended organization would function. The consulting team would remain available to answer questions and offer explanations.