

BMA

Management Consulting Inc.

High Level Core Service Review Fire Department



City of Stratford

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Executive Summary

A high level overview was undertaken on the City of Stratford's Fire Department. This included a review of the organization structure, service delivery, budget, capital and reserve analysis as well as benchmarking on the cost of service and staffing levels.

The Department is organized and delivering services in accordance with recognized practices and is proactively working with the community to support and promote public safety and education.

From a cost of service perspective, the cost borne by taxpayers in the City of Stratford are lower than the survey average on a per \$1,000 of assessment basis and close to the average on a per capita basis.

The Department is in a good financial position with respect to funding its vehicles and equipment on a lifecycle costing basis and continues to set aside reserves on an annual basis for these assets. However, there is currently insufficient funds available in the Fire Building Replacement Reserves to meet the ongoing replacement/refurbishment of these stations.

Further budgetary pressures will be experienced related to increasing the staff complement to move toward achieving the Fire Marshal's guideline with respect to response times and staff available to respond to fires. Based on comparative analysis of the current staffing levels by platoon, the City is lower than several comparators. But with the current plan to add one new firefighter each year, the City will increase its ability to achieve compliance with the guidelines.

The Department is generally following the guidelines set forward by the Ontario Fire Marshal with respect to user fees, however, the fees appear to be low and should be rationalized to ensure that revenues are maximized within the context of improving public fire/life safety.

SWOT Analysis

Key Strengths

- City's Fire Department organization structure is aligned with best practices defined by the Ontario Fire Marshal
- Proactive and planned public education and training is undertaken in all sectors of the community
- Lifecycle costing is being practiced and the Department has maintained its fleet of emergency vehicles and equipment
- Reserve funds are being allocated on an annual basis to ensure that the appropriate funds are available for the replacement of vehicles and equipment on a timely basis
- Economies of scale employed through the provision of dispatch services for the five surrounding Perth County municipalities, which consist of eight additional fire stations
- Low cost of service on a per assessment basis

Key Weaknesses

- Insufficient staffing resources to meet the Fire Marshal's guidelines and lower than a number of comparator municipalities
- User fees appear to be lower than most other municipalities and there are less user fees currently charged in the City which increases the net cost of service
- Relatively higher costs on a per capita basis than comparable municipalities surveyed
- Inadequate reserve funds being allocated to building replacement/refurbishment

Key Opportunities

- Centralized dispatch operation with Police
- Additional user fees and updated fees

Key Threats

- Old and aging fire station requires capital spending and expansion and without adequate reserve funds to support facilities, the Department will be required to compete on an annual basis against other corporate priorities
- Currently not meeting the Fire Marshal's guidelines for service response requiring 10 firefighters within 10 minutes 90% of the time which may pose additional risk and liabilities
- Pending negotiations with respect to Retention/Recognition Pay will further put pressure on the City's operating budget and the need for additional reserves

Review Process

Discussions were held with the Chief and other members of management in the Fire Department to undertake a high level review:

- Policies, procedures and practices
- Compliance with legislation/regulations
- Staffing needs, roles and responsibilities
- Number of stations, workforce
- Organizational structure
- Major projects and priorities
- Current and Capital Budgets

The review of the Fire Department focused on answering the following questions:

- What are the current programs and services?
- Does the program/service support the municipality's priorities?
- Are the objectives currently being met?
- What are the future challenges?
- What are the annual resources/costs?
- How is performance currently measured/tracked?
- Are the service levels and standards defined? What are they?
- How is technology used to meet the demand for services?

Fire prevention and public safety is legislated through the FPPA

The OFM monitors the fire protection services provided by municipalities

One way to monitor municipal operations is through the completion of a detailed municipal survey

Legislation/Regulatory Requirements and Guidelines

Fire Prevention and Protection Act

Fire Prevention and Protection Act (FPPA) 1997, is the governing legislation for fire prevention and public safety in Ontario. Within the framework set out by FPPA, municipalities are responsible for funding and delivering fire protection services and the province is responsible for providing municipalities with advice, guidance and support. Under the Act, municipalities are required, as a minimum, to complete an assessment of the community's fire risks and to establish a program that includes public education with respect to fire safety and certain components of fire prevention. This establishes municipal responsibility for fire protection and makes fire prevention and public education services mandatory.

FPPA does not prescribe the level of emergency response (suppression) that a fire department should provide. The Act states that municipalities are responsible for arranging other fire protection services as determined necessary by the municipality's needs and circumstances.

Role of the Ontario Fire Marshal (OFM)

The Ontario Fire Marshal (OFM) is required to monitor and review the fire protection services provided by municipalities to ensure that they meet their responsibilities under the Act. If the OFM determines that a municipality is failing to comply with its responsibilities or that a serious threat to public safety exists, they have the authority to present the municipal Council with recommendations to rectify the situation.

A key component of the OFM's monitoring and review process is the Municipal Fire Protection Information Survey (MFPIS), which is designed to gather information on municipal fire protection services as they relate to the FPPA minimum service requirements. The minimum requirements include Section 2.(1) (a) of the FPPA which states that every municipality shall "establish a program in the municipality which must include public education with respect to fire safety and certain components of fire prevention."

***The City of
Stratford
participated in the
municipal survey
and received a
Certificate of
Compliance***

The purpose of the survey is to assist municipalities in complying with the requirements for fire protection services, and to enable the OFM to fulfill its responsibility to monitor the levels of fire protection services in Ontario, as prescribed by the FPPA.

The survey comprises the following 13 components:

1. Administration
2. Policies / Guidelines
3. By-law Information
4. Fire Protection Agreements
5. Fire Loss Statistics
6. Fire Cause Determination Practices
7. Fire Prevention Practices
8. Simplified Risk Assessment
9. Fire Inspection Practices
10. Fire Safety Planning
11. Smoke Alarm Initiatives
12. Public Education Practices
13. Public Education Resource Effectiveness Questionnaire

The City of Stratford completed the survey and has achieved compliance with Section 2.1(a) of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act 1997 and has been presented with a Certificate of Compliance.

***City's Fire
Department
organization
structure is aligned
with best practices
defined by the OFM***

Service Overview

The City's service is provided through a full-time workforce.

It is generally accepted that an effective fire protection service delivery system requires the following three lines of fire defence which is promoted by the OFM:

- Public safety education and prevention
- Fire safety standards and enforcement
- Emergency response and suppression

The City has structured its Department to align with the best practices defined by the OFM. The principle objectives of the first two lines of fire defence are fire avoidance and increased fire prevention effectiveness. Fire departments endeavour to achieve these objectives through fire prevention training and education, directed predominately to groups prone to relatively higher incidents of fire (children and seniors), early warning detection and notification systems, built-in suppression systems, establishment of municipal fire by-laws, occupancy inspections and code enforcement.

The City has a Director of Training and Education position, with a focus on promoting public safety and education. To this end, the City takes a proactive approach to public safety education. This includes annual inspections of all non-residential buildings.

Fire and safety education programs are presented to the community through the Home Fire Safety Program. Each house receives an information package containing fire safety practices. The firefighters review these safety procedures with the homeowner and offer a walk-through of their house to check on any fire hazards.

Further, in 1997, the City commenced a 10 year plan to provide free in-home inspections for all residential properties. On average, the Fire Department inspects approximately 800 homes per year. Further, the City provides one free smoke alarm for every home. By providing a focus on training, there is a decrease in liabilities and an increase in response times.

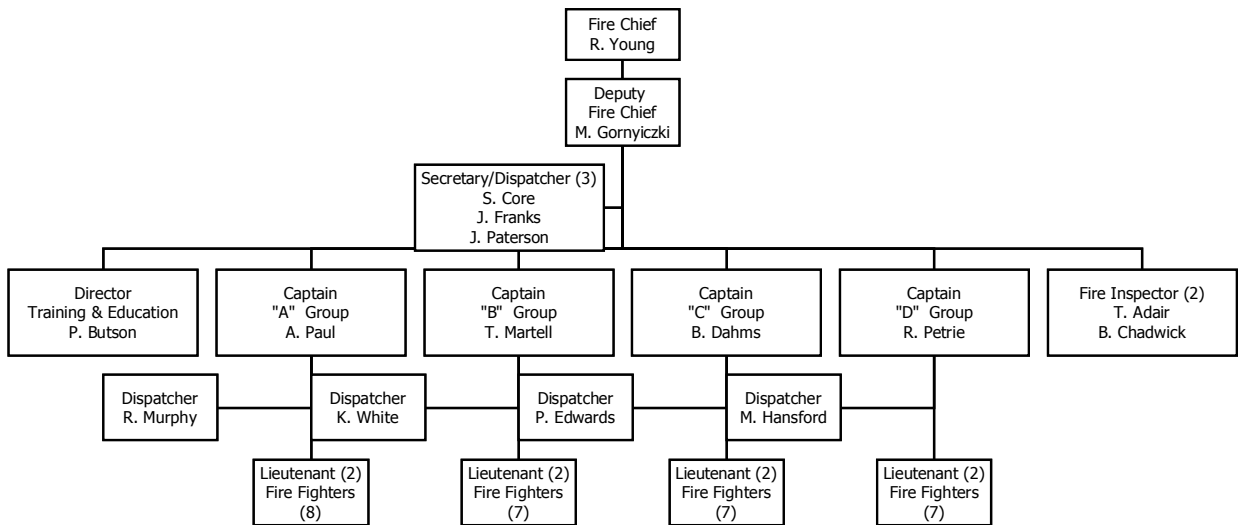
Regardless of the efforts which one may invest in fire avoidance and prevention, fires do happen; accordingly it is essential that the City establish an emergency fire suppression capability, that is tailored to the community's local fire risks. This is the objective of the third line of defence. Factors which will influence the rapid response capability and fireground effectiveness of a fire department include dispatch protocols, firefighter availability, firefighter training, and proper maintenance and availability of suppression apparatus.

In response to life threatening emergencies and dangerous conditions, the Stratford Fire Department provides a full range of fire suppression, life support, hazardous materials response, and technical rescue services.

The communication division dispatches for the City and the five surrounding Perth County municipalities, consists of eight additional fire stations. There are seven municipal fire departments, that make up the Perth County Mutual aid system and requests for assistance are funneled through the Stratford dispatch centre.

Staffing and Service Delivery

The following provides the organization structure. The Department, consisting of 51 personnel, is divided into five divisions – administration, suppression, fire prevention, training and communications. This includes 4 platoons.



***Staffing levels for
frontline
firefighters per
platoon in Stratford
is lower than
comparable
municipalities***

Service is provided through two fire stations located in the north and south ends of the City. The City's organization structure and service delivery approach is very similar to that undertaken in the majority of other municipalities surveyed. As an example, the City of Woodstock also operates using 4 platoons in 2 fire stations and is overseen by a Chief and Deputy. However, in Woodstock, each platoon has 9 firefighters along with a Captain and Lieutenant. St. Thomas also operates with 4 platoons and similar to Woodstock, each platoon has 9 firefighters along with a platoon chief and 2 captains.

The Fire Marshal has guidelines upon which the Department should aspire with respect to response times and the number of responders required to be effective

Fire Marshal's Guidelines

The establishment of standards and guidelines that affect the staffing response to structural fire calls has been a topic of much debate in the fire protection industry for some time. Since there is no legislative performance measures or standards, municipalities are tasked with setting the service level that meets the needs and financial capabilities of their municipality.

Recently, standards and guidelines, influenced by best practices, firefighter safety and the insurance industry, have begun to come together in a much narrower range of accepted best practice. This was led by the adoption of a service standard by the authoritative National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The Office of the Fire Marshal has also published a guideline specifically for Ontario.

As identified in the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*, the Office of the Fire Marshal, Ontario has the power to issue guidelines to municipalities with respect to fire protection services and related matters. The guidelines are to be used by local municipalities to determine the level of fire protection services, as it determines may be necessary, in accordance with its needs and circumstances.

For emergency response, Public Fire Safety Guideline (PFSG) 04-08-12, "Staffing Single Family Dwellings" recommends the following:

- Minimum of 4 firefighters initially responding. A response of four firefighters is widely accepted as the minimum initial response in order to commence limited rescue or fire fighting. Until a minimum of four firefighters have assembled on the fire ground, there is not sufficient staff on hand to safely undertake either of these roles. If fewer than four staff arrive on scene, they must wait until a second vehicle arrives to have sufficient staff to safely undertake a rescue or fire fighting operation.;
- Minimum of 10 firefighters within 10 minutes for fire attack team choosing either aggressive interior fire suppression or rescue operations for 90% of reported fire emergencies;
- Assembly of the 10 firefighters is calculated from the time the fire department receives the emergency alarm until that fire attack team has arrived at the emergency scene.

The City, similar to other small municipalities is facing challenges with respect to its ability to meet the Fire Marshal's guidelines due to budgetary and staffing limitations

Ten firefighters are required for either aggressive interior fire suppression or for rescue operations, but not both. If both are necessary more than ten firefighters are required. For fire suppression, two firefighters (additional to the initial responding four) would undertake interior back up protection while two firefighters would form a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT), able to quickly provide support and assistance to firefighters finding themselves in danger. Finally, a ventilation team of two firefighters would be required for a total of ten firefighters.

This guideline is intended to serve as a level to which small fire departments can aspire. Such a response level is considered insufficient for large urban centres, particularly given the high density and industrial components that present more complex fire problems.

According to the City's 2006 Community Profile document, the average response time is three and one-half minutes to 90% of sites within the City limits. Insurance companies rate Stratford as a "Class 1" community. This category is the lowest in Ontario, resulting in reduced insurance premiums.

One of the challenges currently facing the department is the ability to staff, on an ongoing basis, to meet the Fire Marshal's guidelines. There are occasions where the department is unable to respond with the minimum staffing that is consistent with best practices and performance measures for the Fire Service.

Due to the size of the platoons, which is targeted to be 7 at each station, with vacations, training and sickness, the Chief indicated that these guidelines are generally not achievable with the current staffing levels whereby there are frequently only 4 firefighters on during a shift for each platoon.

To this end, a plan was put in place to add one firefighter each year until the target staffing levels are achieved. In 2007, one firefighter position was added, however, in 2008, due to budgetary restrictions, another firefighter position was not approved.

***Retention/
Recognition Pay is
a budgetary
challenge that may
increase the cost
of service in the
City of Stratford***

Retention/Recognition Pay

In addition to the challenges with respect to ensuring that there are sufficient staffing resources to meet the fire Marshal's guidelines, the Fire Department is also facing budgetary challenges with respect to the proposed Retention/Recognition Pay.

In 2002 the Toronto Police Services negotiated a salary grid based on years of service establishing service/recognition pay based on 3,6,9% increases after 8, 17, 23 years of service. The Toronto Police Services established this retention bonus due to the high level of staff leaving the employment of the City of Toronto to join neighbouring police forces.

The trend in Ontario, as far as wages are concerned, is for parity between police and fire services in their jurisdiction. In August of 2003, the Teplitsky Board of Arbitration awarded the Toronto Professional Firefighter Association wage parity to the Toronto Police Constable. Since 2003 the Retention Pay has been assigned by arbitration or negotiated in Barrie, Brampton, Burlington, Guelph, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Markham, Mississauga, Richmond Hill, Sarnia, Sudbury, Waterloo and Windsor. Also, in the summer of this year the City of Owen Sound negotiated a similar retention bonus to be implemented fully in December of 2008.

The City of Stratford is currently in salary negotiations. Currently, the cost of a retention program has not been included in the City's budget, but, if approved, will have an impact on the cost of operations as funds will be needed in a reserve to offset the associated retention pay costs.

The cost of moving to a retention/recognition pay is estimated to be over \$150,000 annually.

Budget Analysis

Fire Department Summary Net Expenditures	% of 2008 Budget	FINAL 2007 Budget	FINAL 2008 Budget	PROJECTED 2009 Budget 2010 Budget		% Change 2007-2008	% Change 2008-2009	% Change 2009-2010
FIRE PROTECTION ADMINISTRATION	9.4%	\$ 474,549	\$ 492,161	\$ 503,437	\$ 513,899	3.7%	2.3%	2.1%
FIRE PROTECTION DISPATCHING	6.6%	\$ 330,915	\$ 347,232	\$ 361,840	\$ 373,540	4.9%	4.2%	3.2%
FIRE FIGHTING FORCE	75.1%	\$ 3,771,028	\$ 3,943,717	\$ 4,236,210	\$ 4,512,152	4.6%	7.4%	6.5%
FIRE PREVENTION	4.2%	\$ 216,856	\$ 221,368	\$ 228,334	\$ 235,347	2.1%	3.1%	3.1%
FIRE DEPT EQUIPMENT PURCHASES	0.3%	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,250	\$ 13,500	\$ 14,000	1.9%	1.9%	3.7%
FIRE HALL # 1	0.5%	\$ 28,150	\$ 28,650	\$ 29,500	\$ 30,350	1.8%	3.0%	2.9%
FIRE HALL # 2	0.4%	\$ 19,700	\$ 20,250	\$ 20,625	\$ 21,375	2.8%	1.9%	3.6%
FIRE DEPT TRAINING	2.4%	\$ 120,524	\$ 126,025	\$ 130,002	\$ 133,770	4.6%	3.2%	2.9%
FIRE PROTECTION VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT	1.1%	\$ 53,800	\$ 55,400	\$ 56,900	\$ 58,600	3.0%	2.7%	3.0%
Total Net Expenditures	100.0%	\$ 5,028,522	\$ 5,248,053	\$ 5,580,348	\$ 5,893,033	4.4%	6.3%	5.6%

There are limited discretionary items with the City's Fire budget as most costs are salary related

As shown above, approximately 75% of the Department's budget is associated with the firefighting force. The cost of this section is expected to increase fastest over the next several years as a result of a plan to add additional firefighters in a move toward achieving the Fire Marshal's guideline for service.

As shown on the table below, approximately 94% of the total budgeted expenditures are related to salaries, wages and benefits and are expected to increase over time at a faster pace than other Departmental costs associated with salary negotiations and changes in staffing levels.

Fire Department Summary Item of Expenditure	% of 2008 Budget	FINAL 2007 Budget	FINAL 2008 Budget	PROJECTED 2009 Budget 2010 Budget		% Change 2007-2008	% Change 2008-2009	% Change 2009-2010
F.T. SALARIES & WAGES, BENEFITS	93.7%	\$ 4,699,422	\$ 4,916,633	\$ 5,243,603	\$ 5,549,903	4.6%	6.7%	5.8%
MATERIALS, OFFICE SUPPLIES, GENERAL ADMIN COSTS	0.8%	\$ 42,200	\$ 43,470	\$ 44,720	\$ 45,795	3.0%	2.9%	2.4%
UTILITIES	0.7%	\$ 34,700	\$ 35,550	\$ 36,625	\$ 37,675	2.4%	3.0%	2.9%
OTHER STAFFING COSTS, TRAINING, MEMBERSHIPS	0.9%	\$ 49,300	\$ 49,800	\$ 51,100	\$ 52,660	1.0%	2.6%	3.1%
SERVICES - OTHER	0.9%	\$ 43,100	\$ 45,050	\$ 46,000	\$ 47,600	4.5%	2.1%	3.5%
TRANSFERS TO RESERVES	2.9%	\$ 153,000	\$ 153,000	\$ 153,000	\$ 153,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLE EXPENSES	0.9%	\$ 48,400	\$ 48,950	\$ 50,300	\$ 51,900	1.1%	2.8%	3.2%
LEGAL FEES	0.2%	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Less Revenues	-1.0%	\$ (51,600)	\$ (54,400)	\$ (55,000)	\$ (55,500)	5.4%	1.1%	0.9%
Total	100.0%	\$ 5,028,522	\$ 5,248,053	\$ 5,580,348	\$ 5,893,033	4.4%	6.3%	5.6%

While annual transfers are being made to support the replacement of vehicles on a timely basis, similar funds are not available for the replacement/refurbishment of the two fire stations

Upcoming Capital Requirements

The Fire Department has some significant capital requirements to support ongoing operations. The City is transferring \$153,000 annually to a reserve for the replacement of equipment and vehicles based on lifecycle costing, however, no funds have been allocated for the replacement/refurbishment of the fire halls. The fire vehicle depreciation reserve has a balance of approximately \$660,000 and a financing plan has been established whereby future transfers to reserves will be sufficient for the replacement of vehicles on a timely basis.

The Fire Building Reserve has a balance of only \$13,000 which appears to be insufficient to fund ongoing refurbishment of these facilities. Without a detailed accounting of the condition of these facilities, industry standards suggest the need to set aside 2% of the replacement cost of the facilities (\$40,000 annually).

The following table summarizes the total estimated replacement costs for the Department’s current inventory of assets. This includes vehicles, equipment and buildings.

	Total 2007 Estimated Replacement Cost
Furniture & Accessories	\$ 86,687
Supplies and Small Equipment	\$ 563,030
Equipment	\$ 531,513
Hardware	\$ 62,680
Vehicles	\$ 2,555,630
Building	\$ 6,000,000
Total	\$ 9,799,540

The Fire Department has also identified the need for capital funds to enlarge and upgrade station facilities. Specifically, there is insufficient space for records management and to store equipment. The 2008 capital budget includes \$464,000 for a training centre. The 2008 capital budget also included \$25,000 to expand the bay office and work area.

***Many factors
impact the
comparability of
Fire costs and
services***

Benchmarking

The municipalities were chosen on the basis of one or more of the following criteria:

- Population
- Geographic area
- Mix of urban and rural development
- Type of workforce (full-time fire services)

Fire costs will vary significantly based on a number of factors including but not limited to:

- Size of municipality and mix of urban and rural coverage
- Volume and type of activity
- Composition of fire services—use of paid or volunteer firefighters
- Service levels on response time can affect the number of firefighters on staff and the number of fire halls and equipment
- Specialized services
- Accounting and reporting practice
- Dispatch services
- Total assessment base upon which to fund Fire services
- Salary schedules and policies with respect to Retention Pay
- Density
- Size of the municipality and service area

As such, the benchmarking analysis included in this report is not meant to provide an assessment of the efficiency or effectiveness of the services delivered in each community, but has been included to help understand the factors impacting the City's budget and the cost of service.

The table summarizes the municipalities selected and some general information on each of the firefighting services. While there is no one municipality that mirrors the population, geographic area, mix of rural and urban development and type of workforce, a number of municipalities share many similar characteristics.

Municipality	2006 Population	Land Area (Sq. Km)	Density Population/Sq. Km	# of stations	FTE	# of Part Time Staff
Brockville	21,957	21	1,046	2	39	6
Cornwall	45,965	62	743	2	65	0
Owen Sound	21,753	24	906	1	32	0
St. Thomas	36,110	35	1,032	2	59	0
Woodstock	35,480	44	806	2	52	0
Average	32,253	37	907	2	49	1
Median	35,480	35	906	2	52	0
Stratford	30,461	25	1,218	2	52	0

Source: FIR 2006

As shown above, in terms of density and land area, Stratford is most similar to Owen Sound, Brockville and St. Thomas. With the exception of one municipality included in the survey, all fire Departments are operating out of two fire stations.

Generally the cost per capita costs in Stratford are slightly higher than average but lower than average on a per \$1,000 of assessment basis

On a net cost per capita basis, the City's cost is very close to the survey average and median.

Municipality	Net Expenditures	Net Expenditures Per Capita	Operating Expenses per \$1,000 of Property Assessment	Dispatch
Brockville	\$ 3,927,165	\$ 179	\$ 2.38	No Centr. Dispatch
Cornwall	\$ 6,704,431	\$ 146	\$ 2.69	Central Dispatch (F&P)
Owen Sound	\$ 3,331,132	\$ 153	\$ 2.06	Central Dispatch (F&P)
St. Thomas	\$ 6,031,833	\$ 167	\$ 2.83	No Centr. Dispatch
Woodstock	\$ 5,630,499	\$ 159	\$ 2.26	Central Dispatch (F&P)
Average		\$ 161	\$ 2.44	
Median		\$ 159	\$ 2.38	
Stratford	\$ 4,975,296	\$ 163	\$ 2.02	No Centr. Dispatch

These costs are driven in part by whether the municipality is using joint dispatch with police or is decentralized, as is the case in the City of Stratford. For example, the City of Brockville which has the higher net expenditures per capita also does not have a central dispatch service.

The City has been pursuing joint dispatch services for 10+ years and has yet to be able to implement such a system. While long term savings could be realized in staffing and shared equipment, the arbitration process did not return a favourable outcome in this regard. Further, the savings that would have materialized several years ago are no longer as significant due to changes in the environment.

Costs were also analyzed using the Municipal Performance Measure Program (MPMP) which compares the operating costs on a per \$1,000 of assessment. As shown above, using this benchmark, which is an indication of the cost borne by taxpayers, the City of Stratford's costs are amongst the lowest in the survey. Stratford has the highest assessment per capita in the survey. While the overall costs are generally higher from a per capita perspective, due to a relatively rich assessment base in the City, the costs per assessment are low which reduces the overall cost to a taxpayer.

User Fees

Municipalities may find revenue-generating opportunities for some services they provide without compromising public fire safety. Fees for services have been successfully implemented by many fire departments as one viable option to help defray appropriate operating costs.

The Ontario Fire Marshal recommends that application of user fees should be considered:

- user fees should be encouraged if they have the potential to improve public fire/life safety
- user fees should not be considered if they have the potential to jeopardize fire/life safety or for programs that directly contribute to public safety as well as high esteem for local fire departments

According to the OFM, there are three types of fees to be considered:

1. Traditional or generally accepted service fees

These are services which are currently being charged to users by many fire departments and generally accepted by the public.

2. Competitive or Increased Risk Management

These are services which some municipalities have chosen to provide along with a charge. In evaluating the service and fee charges municipalities may want to consider the impact on private enterprise, if it exists, and the potential increase of risk or liability

3. Inappropriate or not meeting principles

These are areas not recommended by the OFM to recover costs from the users because by imposing a fee this may cause the public to hesitate in calling for fire department assistance during a real or perceived emergency. The negligence of one resident should not have an adverse impact on another; example; failure to notify the fire department could lead to the fire extending to a neighbouring property.

The City has implemented limited fees in accordance with best practices identified by the OFM

While the City is charging for a number of administrative services, fees appear to be low from a comparative basis

The City has implemented fees for its fire prevention activities

1. Traditional or generally accepted service fees

These fees generally include administration fees such as letters and/or copies of reports requested by or for lawyers, insurance companies, occupant loads, government funding, real estate brokers, required licenses and approval by other agencies. This may also include special occasion permits and issuing permits such as approved burning or fireworks.

Currently, the City’s fee and permit schedule includes:

- Property records search and letter \$40
- Officer incident report \$30

In comparison to other municipalities surveyed, the City’s fees tend to be low and should be rationalized in this area in terms of the underlying cost of service. Further, the City does not appear to have a special occasion permit.

In addition to administrative fees, a number of municipalities charge fire prevention fees. Examples include inspections where requested or required by a person making a profit from the use of premises, property or equipment such as; the sale or purchase of properties, approval for liquor licenses, woodstove/fireplace inspections for insurance companies, tents or marquees for special assembly occupancy events, special event, open burning or fireworks permit compliance, determining existing room or building occupant loads, commercial/industrial other than as part of routine programs.

In this regard, the City’s fees and permit schedule includes:

- Open fire inspection and permit \$50
- Annual fire inspection for inns and short Term accommodation residential zones \$85 + \$10 per unit over one
- Air cylinder refill 30-45-60 minutes \$30, 300 cubic Foot capacity

There may be an opportunity to establish some additional fees

From a suppression/rescue perspective the following includes fees that some municipalities charge:

- ✓ Responses on all provincial highways or right of ways
- ✓ Extrication services to non residents on municipal roads
- ✓ Suppression/rescue activities contracted by agreement
- ✓ Special contract services such as hazmat or water rescue
- ✓ Automatic aid for specific suppression or rescue activities
- × Specific false alarm or open burning responses
- × Requested stand by for special events
- × Training for private or industrial fire fighting groups

The City has implemented the majority of these fees on a cost recovery basis (noted with a check mark above) but does not appear to be charging for false alarms, special events and training for private or industrial fire fighting. As part of an overall user fee review process, these decisions should be rationalized.

2. Competitive or Increased Risk Management

The following is a sample list of some of these services;

- ✓ filling air cylinders for the public
- × woodstove/fireplace inspections for insurance companies
- × filling swimming pools
- × flooding private skating rinks
- × rental of fire department equipment
- × selling and/or maintaining fire extinguishers
- × selling and/or installing key lock boxes
- × selling and/or installing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

As shown above, there are a number of areas where fees have not been implemented by the City of Stratford in accordance with the OFM for the above noted services. Again, these decisions should be rationalized.

3. Inappropriate or not meeting principles

There are programs which have greatly contributed to public safety as well as high esteem for local fire departments and should remain within municipal funding.

- fire, rescue and medical emergency calls
- home inspection programs
- routine inspections identified by the fire prevention policy
- unintentional or accidental false alarms
- public fire safety and education programs

The City has followed the guidelines set out by the OFM and has not charged fees for services that, by imposing a fee, may cause the public to hesitate in calling for Fire Department assistance during a real or perceived emergency.

User Fee Comparison

Municipality	User Fees	User Fees Per Capita
Brockville	\$ 74,557	\$ 3.40
Cornwall	\$ 26,291	\$ 0.57
Owen Sound	\$ 9,483	\$ 0.44
St. Thomas	\$ 9,528	\$ 0.26
Stratford	\$ 6,200	\$ 0.20
Woodstock	\$ 15,070	\$ 0.42
Average		\$ 0.88
Median		\$ 0.43
Min		\$ 0.20
Max		\$ 3.40

The table to the left summarizes a comparison of the user fee revenues on a per capita basis in Stratford compared to other municipalities surveyed. While the City of Stratford has generally followed the practices outlined by the OFM in terms of what fees should be instituted, the user fees have not been updated on a regular basis and tend to be lower than a number of the other municipalities surveyed. This results in lower than average user fee revenues.

User fees were updated in 2005 and again in 2008. Stratford does not have user fee policies per se that would identify the extent to which

the fees are to recover the full cost of service, nor is there a process in place that would require fees to be reviewed on an annual basis.

Source: FIR 2006

While the City of Stratford has instituted a number of fees, the fees are generally lower in Stratford. For example, the City of Woodstock generates almost double the user fee revenues in Fire compared to the City of Stratford and has a similar population base and approach to service delivery.