

Continued Partnership for Saskatoon Police and Fire

ISSUE

The Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) and the Saskatoon Fire Department (SFD) are connected through response, committees, working groups, and training. The realization is that a formalized comprehensive agreement will assist in strategically prioritizing community needs and staff safety and provide a living document for future coordinated strategic planning.

BACKGROUND

The SPS and SFD have a long history of working together through emergency incidents, coordinated event response, fire investigations, and preparation for community-impacting events through an Emergency Management/Incident Command approach. Through discussions, Commissioner Jyotsna Custead requested an information report be submitted to the Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners describing the current relationship between public safety services and the concept of a partnership agreement.

CURRENT STATUS

Resilient communities are connected through strong social networks and have mitigation strategies, and resources in place to prepare for, to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations. Saskatoon takes a whole-community approach amongst residents, businesses, critical infrastructure, community organizations, and all levels of government which is necessary to enhance everyone's safety and well-being. The level of collaboration and commitment to public safety between the two municipal emergency services is a model that is a leading practice in Canada.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Each agency plays an important role in Saskatoon's priority of Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) recognizing that building safe and healthy communities is a shared responsibility. The complex risks to safety and well-being cannot be addressed in isolation.

Communities prepare for major events and emergencies; however, each community has a responsibility to prepare for all. Focusing on all levels of emergencies is key for both, knowing that immediacy related to the microcosm in Saskatoon is CSWB. The SPS and SFD have identified a focus and commitment to CSWB through strategic plans, business plans, agreements, and joint programming. This is where the adaptability of partnerships based on community needs and appropriate involvement through a coordinated approach is key.

The [SPS 2020-2024 Strategic Plan](#) and [SFD 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#), and service business plans for both agencies, identify public safety as a shared responsibility, through strengthened partnerships and coordinated responses.

Components of a future comprehensive Partnership Agreement include, but are not limited to:

Training

SPS and SFD technical teams have skills that can be enhanced by regularly cross-training between agencies. Many of these skills require specialized facilities or props to conduct these specific skills.

A shared training facility would encourage further collaborations between specialized teams and beyond. The sharing of this type of resources and cross-industry knowledge between our emergency services will effectively and efficiently provide multi-sector benefits.

A facility focused on advancing safety in all industries across the province will bring communities together, align common interests, and promote interoperability for mutual benefit.

- Saskatoon Fire has begun the development of a 40-acre Training Facility that has joint-use potential.
- The vision for Phase 2 is to build an indoor training arena to facilitate year-round all-hazards multi-sectoral training.

Exercising incident management teams for complex and escalating cross-jurisdictional incidents assists in preparing for emergency event response.

Saskatoon Coordinated Safety Team

In response to community safety challenges that began to emerge with greater intensity in December 2021, and growing out of the fledgling SFD/SPS Focused Attention Task Force (FATF) which took shape as a response in support of mitigating public safety concerns at the 1st Avenue location of the Emergency Wellness Center, the Saskatoon Coordinated Safety Team has come to exist as a whole-of-government approach to these challenges. The Coordinated Safety team is a jointly led initiative of SFD/SPS, as well as the Mayor's Office which helps liaise and support greater coordination with other orders of government and community partners. This team identifies the need for urgent interventions, rightsized responses, and all resources needed to address challenges to community safety and well-being. Through the sharing of information, this team utilizes data-driven models and academic resources that have established templates to determine and track response commitment and the appropriateness of service delivery methods.

Interoperability

Interoperability between public safety partners is key to connecting people, information, and ideas. Providing coordinated collaboration involves a commitment to reciprocity, working on the same challenges and initiatives, sharing solutions, and being efficient with shared resources. Some examples of this with SPS and SFD are:

- SPS Air Support Unit and Drones (provide situational awareness and ongoing assessment i.e., structure fires, water rescues and searches, fire investigations);
- SFD Aerial Apparatus (access for retrieval of evidence or provide access to elevated areas);
- Unified command set up at incidents of share jurisdiction;
- SFD Water Rescue Team (retrieval of evidence);
- SFD Hazardous Materials team (Clandestine labs); and
- Mobile Command Unit (Command 9).

An Interoperability Committee Terms of Reference has been finalized between the SPS and SFD to provide the ability of emergency personnel to communicate and operate in conjunction with each other between jurisdictions and disciplines for the common goal to serve the community. Four elements integral to successful interoperability are governance, standard operating procedures, technology, and training.

Community Well-being Committee

The committee includes partners that identify properties, locations, and individuals in Saskatoon where mental health, such as hoarding, addiction, or unsafe/inadequate living conditions, is or may be a concern. Partners from the SPS include the Community Mobilization Unit, Community Liaison Officers, Alternative Response Officers, Patrol Officers, and various agencies in the Saskatoon HUB. Information sharing is key for this committee to work together for better outcomes for individual(s) in need of support through collaborative solutions.

Safe Community Task Force

This is a partnership between the SFD, SPS, and other organizations. This task force addresses properties of concern within the community affecting the health, safety and amenity of neighborhoods. This is an information-sharing task force that may conduct joint inspections and work together as partners to restore properties while addressing concerns within Saskatoon.

Community Relations

Initiatives engaging both departments with the community include the proactive promotion of municipal emergency services through the EXXPLORE event to highlight front-line services. Additionally, past programs such as the Community Police and Fire Academy age-friendly program designed to engage older adults and provide information on safety and security.

Community Risk Reduction

A long-standing working relationship remains when fire investigations are deemed suspicious. SFD's Fire Investigators conduct cause and origin scene examinations where fire has extended beyond its point of origin. SPS's Arson Investigators are requested where the scene examination indicates the fire was deliberately set. The SFD and SPS investigators work together to process the scene following each department's mandate and role within these investigations. An information-sharing agreement outlines the roles and use of information between both agencies.

Emergency Management - One City Approach

There is an opportunity for partners to continue to develop a shared responsibility in protecting the safety and security of all residents employing an Emergency Management Framework. This process is a defined, coordinated approach to preparing for, mitigating, responding to, and recovery from events that could impact Saskatoon's resiliency. The framework is based on a Unity of Leadership and Autonomy of Command basis. SPS, SFD, and EMO currently use this framework for:

- Large Special Events in public areas in Saskatoon, preparation and response;
- Activation of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan – through virtual and physical Emergency Operations Centre activations;
 - includes large-impact weather events; and
- Mobile Command Unit activations.

With interconnected work, it is important to create a unified plan and articulate five interdependent foundational components that contribute to CSWB through a “One City” approach (Appendix 1):

- Prevention;
- Mitigation;
- Preparedness;
- Response; and
- Recovery.

Partnerships in public safety promote efficiencies in service and help guide future direction for greater outcomes. This is achieved at all levels of the services, starting with commitment with the Board of Police Commissioners, City Council, CSWB Executive, safety plans, interoperability agreements, training, and data sharing.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications at this time.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The [Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey 2023](#) indicates the two most important issues facing the City of Saskatoon relate to homelessness and public safety. Both the SPS and SFD are committed, through various partnerships and committees, to address public safety issues.

Through commitment to the development of a comprehensive partnership agreement, there will be synergies realized and opportunities to continue exploration of further coordination that will create efficiencies and effectiveness for the betterment of the community and create an increased level of public trust.

NEXT STEPS

Through this work, the partners are identifying greater opportunities for coordination and partnership between the SFD, SPS and City of Saskatoon. This includes data sharing, coordinated community responses to issues of homelessness and neighbourhood safety, clean-up of parks and alleys affected by encampments, and other opportunities.

Reactive and proactive tactics to public safety remain a core focus for both municipal emergency services through:

- Current project work on joint initiatives;
- Development of a draft comprehensive partnership agreement defining all joint corporate initiatives between the SPS and SFD; and
- Development of a timeline with key benchmarks to finalize the agreement.

Further reports and recommendations will be brought forward as part of this work.

APPENDIX

1. Foundational Components Through Emergency Management

Reviewed by: Darren Pringle, Superintendent, Saskatoon Police Service
Written and
Approved by: Morgan Hackl, Fire Chief