10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of developing a Fire Master Plan is to conduct an evaluation of the current state of affairs while taking into consideration the future challenges of providing municipal fire services. Balancing short-term and long-term strategies is essential in order to deliver and maintain appropriate levels of service to the community as it evolves over time.

10.1 Peer Comparison

Budget figures for Sarnia Fire Rescue Service in 2006 show projected expenditures of approximately $11.4 million. When considering expenditures a peer comparison approach can provide insight to the decision making process. The 2006 Municipal Study produced by BMA Management Consulting compares various indicators for 67 Ontario municipalities.

The fire services portion of the study shows a fire service cost of $166 per capita for the City of Sarnia. This compares with a per capita average of $98 and a high of $195 in the municipalities that were studied. The BMA report points out that the cost of fire department operations varies significantly based on a number of factors including, but not limited to:

- size of municipality and mix of urban and rural coverage;
- volume of activity, including call volume;
- composition of fire services (use of paid or volunteer firefighters);
- response time and service levels, which affect the number of firefighters on staff, the number of fire halls and equipment;
- specialized services; and
- accounting and reporting practices.

The “Fire Services Efficiency” indicator can also be used to evaluate a department in comparison to its peers. As shown in ***Table 10.1***, the City of Sarnia is more or less on par with other similar-sized municipalities with full time fire departments, showing 2005 operating costs of $2.39 per $1000 residential assessment.

10.2 Implementation

Developing a phased implementation strategy will provide the Fire Department with the resources to address current challenges, as well as the flexibility to adjust as the community grows and the requirements of service delivery change.

Table 10.1: Municipal Performance Measures Program Fire Efficiency Comparison Table

City	Population (2001)	Fire Services Efficiency ($ per $1,000 of property assessment) 2005	2004	2003	2002	Staffing	Coverage Area (Sq.km)	Fire Prevention Staff
North Bay	52,771	2.86	2.69	2.61	2.39	Full Time	312	9
Cornwall	45,640	2.71	2.46	2.36	2.57	Full Time	62	3
Sarnia	70,876	2.39	2.23	2.31	2.26	Full Time	165	7
Peterborough	71,446	2.14	1.84	-	-	Full Time	59	4
Waterloo	86,543	1.05	1.03	1.08	1.16	Full Time	64	6

Principal Sources: *Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing* and *Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM)*. Note that the OFM does not keep track of public educators separately.

The following areas have been identified as priorities requiring operating and capital expenditures over the life of the Fire Master Plan (i.e. next ten years):

- Management, administrative and support staffing;
- Replacement of fleet vehicles;
- Building of an additional station and relocation of two current stations;
- Increases to firefighter staffing; and
- Adding software features for improved documentation capability.

As detailed in **Section 5**, Option 8 was ranked as the best course of action to improve the City's level of service in fire suppression. Option 8 included:

- increasing minimum staffing on front line apparatus to 4 firefighters at all stations;
- building a new fire station (i.e. Station 6) to accommodate urban growth areas;
- relocating Station 2 to improve service to the industrial zone of the city; and
- relocating Station 3 to a more optimal location.

In the coming years there will also be requirements to replace and/or refurbish vehicles in the fleet, add new service vehicles and hire firefighters to keep up with current standards and increased coverage area. In order to gradually reach the recommended targets, the implementation plan detailed below is proposed.

Implementation Plan:

2007
In the first year of the plan priority is given to "day staffing" needs, adding firefighters to front line vehicles and replacing one of the fleet's over-aged vehicles.

The part-time clerical position should be increased to a full-time position. Creating a second Deputy Chief position or Assistant Deputy Chief position is recommended. It is also recommended that a Fire Prevention Officer be hired to focus specifically on industrial concerns.

It is recommended that the over-aged Engine 5 be replaced with a similar "quint" type vehicle (as approved in the 2007 Capital Budget).

2008
In order to reach staffing standards consistent with industry best practices, it is recommended that one additional firefighter position be added to all four shifts at each of Stations 1, 2, and 5. Hiring 12 firefighters will be required to cover shift rotations at each of these stations.

The creation of an analyst position should be undertaken to support management in procedure and policy development (could be a term or contract position). Additionally, a Training Officer (Industrial) To further increase the effectiveness of "day staff" in the areas of Fire Prevention and Public Education, and Training, a new administrative assistant position should be created.

It is recommended that the over-aged Engine 2 be replaced with a similar "quint" type vehicle.

Finally, upgrades to the Fire Department's records management software (FDM software) and a space needs study should be undertaken.

2009
In year three, Station 3 should be relocated (as outlined in the Capital Plan). The hiring of six full-time firefighters should be undertaken to eventually staff a new half company in Station 4.

2010
In year four, six full-time firefighters should be hired to complete staffing for a half company. An auxiliary vehicle (e.g. mini-pumper) must be purchased (as outlined in the Capital Plan).

2011
In year five, relocation of Station 2 could be considered (as outlined in the Capital Plan).

2012
In year six, four full-time firefighters should be hired and located at Station 1 temporarily, until the new Station 6 is opened.

2013
In year seven, the replacement of Engine 1 could be scheduled as it will have reached a fifteen year age as a front line apparatus. There may be residual value for this vehicle or ability to use it as a reserve.

Four full-time firefighters should be hired and located at Station 1 temporarily, until the new Station 6 is opened.

2014-2015
In years eight and nine, the replacement of Engines 3 and Ladder 4 could be scheduled as both will have reached a fifteen year age as a front line apparatus. There may be residual value for these vehicles or ability to use as a reserve.

Four full-time firefighters should be hired each year and located at Station 1 temporarily, until the new Station 6 is opened.

2016
In year ten, a new pumper apparatus should be purchased and Station 6 opened. Staff hired in previous years at Station 1 would be shifted to Station 6.

The cumulative annual increase in operating costs for these proposed expenditures at the end of the 10 year plan is expected to be $3.7 million, while total of new capital expenditures for stations, equipment and vehicles over the same period can be expected to be approximately $5 million.

Development Charges

The purchase of new vehicles and building of new fire stations to accommodate growth in the municipality are eligible for development charges. It may be appropriate that a portion of these costs be covered by development charges.