

Heavy Urban Search and Rescue Program - Fire Services

(City Council on December 14, 15 and 16, 1999, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Community Services Committee recommends the adoption of the following joint report (November 17, 1999) from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services and the Fire Chief:

Purpose:

To request City Council's endorsement of the concept of a City of Toronto multi-agency Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (HUSAR) Team and to receive Council's approval to apply for an applicable provincial grant.

Funding Sources, Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no additional funding implications associated with Council's endorsement of this report. The funding for the training and equipping of the proposed team is via an application for a provincial grant under the J.E.P.P. program, an emergency preparedness program that identifies and distributes monies that are used to improve emergency preparedness in Ontario.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that City Council endorse the concept of a Heavy Urban Search and Rescue program and give approval for staff of Fire Services to apply for a provincial grant under the J.E.P.P. program.

Council Reference/Background/History:

Staff of Toronto Fire Services have been involved on a national committee led by Emergency Preparedness Canada over recent years to develop a mandate and standards that will enable the assembly of a HUSAR team. With increasing concerns over the ability of the City of Toronto to respond in a co-ordinated and effective fashion to serious incidents such as building collapses, a decision was made to carry out research and development with a view to assembling such a team.

Fire Services staff have worked closely with municipalities across Canada including the City of Vancouver since early 1998 in preparing this proposed team. The City of Vancouver has trained and equipped a HUSAR team with the assistance of Emergency Preparedness Canada and the provincial emergency preparedness authorities in British Columbia. The City of Vancouver team is a multi-agency team that draws from a wide variety of City departments. Their team led by staff of Fire Services is composed of representatives from Police, Fire, Ambulance, Works and the Building Department, amongst others.

Toronto Fire Services envisions a team that is supported by the City of Toronto, and staffed by City personnel with some possible outside resources added, such as physicians with specialized skills. This would be a similar organization to the Heavy Urban Search and Rescue team that is in place in Vancouver.

Conclusions:

The establishment of the Toronto Heavy Urban Search and Rescue Team will provide an effective team that can respond to serious emergencies involving technical search and rescue in Toronto. In addition to providing this specialized service in our City, this team will be able to respond within other regions of the Province. The technical training components include trench rescue, confined space rescue and high angle/rope rescue of endangered persons, etc.

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