



**The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie**

C O U N C I L R E P O R T

November 17, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Peter Johnson, Fire Chief
DEPARTMENT: Fire Services
RE: Service Level Change – Fire Services

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the predicted financial implication to the 2026 operating budget as a result of absences due to a combination of non-occupational injuries, WSIB, illnesses and parental/maternity leaves. Further, to seek approval of increasing the total complement of Fire Services by one Full Time Equivalent (FTE) on a temporary basis to reduce the financial impact associated with these absences.

Background

Through the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* (FPPA), the Fire Chief is responsible for reporting and informing Council on strategic and operational requirements. Identified in the FPPA, a municipality's level of service is determined by the Mayor and Council. This is based on local needs and circumstances.

Currently, the total complement for Fire Services is ninety-nine members. Specifically, in Operations (suppression), the complement is eighty-one. This includes eighty Firefighters and one Training Officer.

Contained in the Fire Prevention Division complement is a total of six staff, which consists of four Fire Prevention Officers, one Public Education Officer, and one Fire Prevention Planner.

The above staffing complement was contained in the approved Fire Master Plan by Council.

Analysis

Fire Services has a lean staffing model. This model offers a budget-friendly impact while maintaining optimum service to the community; however, a lean staffing model does not accommodate absences due to illness, injury, WSIB, parental, and/or maternity leave. These absences are backfilled with overtime to maintain the daily on-duty minimum staffing requirements.

Currently, several of the above-listed absences will have a financial impact on the 2026 operating budget.

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These absences have created a gap (shortage) in staffing, and there will be an increased cost to the overtime budget if no mitigating actions are put in place.

Fire Services is seeking approval to proceed with the addition of one FTE to the approved complement in Operations (suppression).

Financial Implications

The table below reflects the anticipated cost if we did not increase the complement as well as the cost of hiring an additional individual.

Status quo	Shifts	Hrs	Temp. Promo	OT	Total
Fire Officer	73	1752	\$17,984	\$133,460	\$151,444

Option	Wage	Benefits	Gear/Uniform	Total
Hire	\$79,290	\$23,787	\$7,568	\$110,645

Staff are recommending the hiring of an additional FTE on a temporary basis as there is a significant amount of cost avoidance in doing so. The 2026 budget does not include these costs. As this strategy has not yet been approved by Council, staff will include the financial implication as an adjustment during 2026 budget deliberations. This should form part of the base budget to be deliberated upon rather than a service level change and will be presented accordingly.

Should Council approve the strategy included within this report, it will put pressure of \$111,000 on the tax levy for 2026.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

Service Delivery – By implementing this plan, the City of Sault Ste. Marie Fire Service will continue to provide a financially responsible, efficient, and effective service to the community, resulting in excellent customer service.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Fire Chief dated November 17, 2025 concerning Service Level Change – Fire Services be received and that Council refer the addition of one FTE on a temporary basis to 2026 budget deliberations.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Johnson

Fire Chief

705.949.3333

p.johnson@cityssm.on.ca