TO: Chair and Members  
Emergency & Community Services Committee  

WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE

COMMITTEE DATE: September 8, 2010

SUBJECT/REPORT NO:  
Occupational Health Exposure Program (HES10012) (City Wide)

SUBMITTED BY:  
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General Manager / Chief  
Hamilton Emergency Services

PREPARED BY:  
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SIGNATURE:

RECOMMENDATION

That the contract with Care-A-Van Inc., the service provider of occupational health and exposure screening for Hamilton Emergency Services-Fire, be renewed for a five (5) year period, commencing November 30, 2010.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Care-A-Van Inc. has been our sole provider of occupational health and exposure screening since its inception following the Plastimet fire in 1997. The Occupational Health and Exposure Program (OHEP) integrates medical surveillance, risk assessment, clinical occupational health services, and disability management to improve the occupational health and safety of Hamilton Emergency Services - Fire (HES) personnel.

Care-A-Van has created and administered this program for the collection and analysis of medical and other data to increase their knowledge of occupational illness and diseases of fire department personnel with a view to improving the protection, health
and working conditions of fire department personnel. The mission of this program is to protect the health and well-being of the members of HES-Fire by increasing their member’s awareness and understanding of occupational health issues and the early detection of exposure problems related to occupational illness and disease.

In order to provide a consistent and continuous level of service, it would be in the Department’s best interest that this program and its members continue their partnership with Care-A-Van Inc.

The benefits of maintaining a relationship with Care-A-Van include the following:

- Care-A-Van has established and maintained 13 years of sensitive and confidential Medical History for HES-Fire participants.
- Care-A-Van’s Occupational Health Physician, Dr. Mike Pysklywec, has fostered a consistent, personal and compassionate individual relationship with the participants and this company.
- Care-A-Van operates using staff that are affiliated with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. (OHCOW), which is comprised of health professionals: nurses, hygienists, ergonomists and physicians that identify work-related illness and injuries, promote awareness of health and safety issues, and develop prevention strategies.
- Research and academic partnerships (such as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board-WSIB) may allow for the development and enhancement of the program and allow others to learn from OHEP initiatives.

Care-A-Van will continue to deliver the following medical components:

- Laboratory tests: including blood analysis and urine testing;
- Pulmonary Function tests;
- Chest X – Ray;
- Individual Medical Exam;
- Patient / Physician Interview;
- Medical and Occupational History: including workplace exposure records, vaccinations, and biological exposure incidents;
- Individual Review and Analysis;
- Group Analysis – Completed after the first four (4) elements;
- Medical Results: individual results, comparisons and trends; and
- Cancer Registry – Regional Cancer Research Centre

HES-Fire has enjoyed a trusted medical relationship with Care-A-Van and the personal individual knowledge that has been established between the Fire staff and this company.

Alternatives for Consideration – see page 5.
Vision: To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.

Values: Honesty, Accountability, Innovation, Leadership, Respect, Excellence, Teamwork

FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (for Recommendation(s) only)

Financial: This program is currently funded through an existing annual operating budget of approximately $198,810.

Staffing: None

Legal: None

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Chronology of events)

The City of Hamilton has long supported our Long-Term Medical Surveillance Program, which is detailed in the Agreement between the City of Hamilton, the Hamilton Fire Department and the Hamilton Professional Fire Fighters Association (HPFFA) dated December 9, 1997.

Care-A-Van employs the personnel that were formerly with the McMaster Occupational Health and Environmental Clinic. This Clinic as well as others was asked to find other facilities when McMaster Hospital increased the size of the Children’s wards. Care-A-Van administers the program, contracts the laboratory technicians for the visits, and handles the file storage and data base maintenance.

In 1997, the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) provided information to the HPFFA (Local 288), HES and the Ministry of Labour regarding exposure issues and appropriate medical tests after the Plastimet fire. For the OHEP OHCOW provides the Occupational Health Specialists (physicians, epidemiologist, nurses, and industrial hygienists) and develops the group analysis. OHCOW developed the Pre-Sample, Medical and Exposure questionnaires as well as the personal exposure diaries that are provided to the participants. Most organizations specialize in one area or the other. These two groups have proven that they can work together to provide all the needs of the OHEP program. They have also proven their ability to successfully work with the private sector partners who provide the diverse clinical services for the program.

Both organizations have been flexible and adaptive to the needs of HES. They understand how to work with an emergency service and are able to handle last minute changes at the Clinic and have the ability to come to the stations when necessary and provide their services at different hours of the day without an increase in costs. They have adhered to all of the program’s needs in the most professional manner. They have continually worked with us at the grass roots level to make this program a success. They have also been understanding of the nature of a Fire Service and have
helped to minimize costs to the program due to problems caused by the nature of our business. The administration of the OHEP program has met all budgetary parameters since its inception.

Our current provider, recognizing their particular specialties, submitted a joint proposal in the 1998 and 2001 Request for Proposals for the OHEP program. They were successful since no other organization could provide the breadth of experience that they jointly brought to the table and have, therefore, been involved with the OHEP program since its inception.

The OHEP is designed to do the following:

(a) To monitor the effects of exposure to biological, physical, and chemical agents;
(b) To detect changes in an individual's health that may be related to harmful working conditions;
(c) To detect any patterns in the work force that might indicate underlying work related problems;
(d) To provide the worker with information about the individual's occupational hazards and current health;
(e) To make participants aware of the relevance of the prescribed clinical tests beforehand including the possible interpretations of "false positives" or "non occupational positives";
(f) To address occupational exposure/health related stress;
(g) To provide information to the relevant parties (i.e. Joint Health and Safety Committee) to assist them in identifying and recognizing the conditions and exposures that the fire department personnel experience so that appropriate steps can be taken to prevent further exposure that may result in occupational disease and injury;
(h) To provide for a confidential process to gathers and uses medical information from the participants;
(i) To track the health of fire department personnel exposed by the Plastimet fire as well as all other fire department personnel;
(j) To generally carry out the objectives of the mission statement of the Occupational Health and Exposure Program; and,
(k) To endeavour to assist in the improvement of the health and safety of the fire service in general.

Council has already demonstrated its commitment by agreeing to this 25 year program since its approval in 1997. As previously indicated, the objective of this program is to monitor and detect any changes in a firefighter’s health so that the appropriate action can be taken to safeguard their health and well being.
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Purchasing Policy #11

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

In order to ensure that the best value of an acquisition was obtained during this process, consultation with the Manager of Purchasing was arranged. There were two (2) viable options presented to the Health and Safety Labour Co-Chair and Management Co-Chair.

ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

(include Performance Measurement/Benchmarking Data, if applicable)

One of the many hazards that firefighters face routinely are toxic environments. Rapid changes in construction product development have added a myriad of poisons and toxic gases to today’s house fire. Management Staff believes that our front line firefighters/staff are entitled to the occupational benefits that most accurately reflect their work.

HES is committed to helping its firefighters identify potential health conditions, recover their health, return to work and move forward with their lives with dignity. HES has established, over many years, a strong professional relationship with Care-A-Van and their Occupational Health Team of Physicians, Nurses and Lab personnel. HES-Fire is recommending that this be permitted to continue due to the consistent, cost effective, and results oriented service delivery that we have been accustom to.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

One alternative for consideration is that HES develops a Request for Proposal (RFP), which may result in a different vendor being selected as the service provider.

It is felt that this process may jeopardize the existing program quality, as it would mean that a different vendor could be selected and that a new working relationship with the participants of this program would have to be redeveloped. Changing vendors could create a negative impact on the psychological well being of the members of the HPFFA,
as the current OHEP program has taken many years for this program and the physician – patient relationship to be mutually fostered.

The timeliness of permitting this program to continue with the current vendor is crucial given the fact that it the data collection is annually scheduled each year from September until the end of April. In recent years, HES-Fire has submitted Purchasing Policy 11 forms in order to extend the services with this vendor, in order to keep this program running efficiently. Repeating this process, although recognized as being not ideal was done to ensure that there were no interruptions in service delivery for our staff.

Financial Implications:

Pro – This program has an existing operating budget, which it has never exceeded with this current Vendor. The budget has in fact remained the same for the last 13 years. 
Con - Selecting a new Vendor may have the potential for increased costs.

Staffing Implications:

Pro – There are no staffing implications as this program is operated by the current Vendor.
Con - None

Legal Implications:

Pro – There are no legal implications to note.
Con - None

Policy Implications:

Pro – This will eliminate the need for program extensions (policy 11).
Con – Policy 11 or Request for Proposal would be considered.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN  (Linkage to Desired End Results)


Skilled, Innovative and Respectful Organization

- A culture of excellence
- A skilled, adaptive and diverse workforce, i.e. more flexible staff
An enabling work environment – respectful culture, well-being and safety, effective communication, supportive workplace.

- More innovation, greater teamwork, better client focus
- Opportunity for employee input in management decision making
- Council and SMT are recognized for their leadership, integrity and support of this program.

**Financial Sustainability**

- Effective and sustainable

**Intergovernmental Relationships**

- Influence federal and provincial policy development to benefit Hamilton.
- Acquire greater share of Provincial and Federal grants (including those that meet specific needs)
- Maintain effective relationships with other public agencies (WSIB, OHCOW)

**Healthy Community**

- Plan and manage the built environment
- Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety, work, recreation and support for all (Human Services)

**APPENDICES / SCHEDULES**

None.