

PUBLIC

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK
POLICE SERVICES BOARD

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

Project Nova – Frontline Modernization Initiatives

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Board receive this report for information.

SYNOPSIS

In June 2019, Project Nova commenced under the umbrella of the Breakthrough organizational culture transformation initiative that aims to ensure York Regional Police (YRP) members feel valued and supported. This report highlights the important work that Nova has undertaken to achieve the project's primary goals of improving efficiency, effectiveness and quality of life for frontline members. Nova's focus is to evaluate district patrol operations, review response to critical calls for service and identify modernization opportunities. Several new or alternative approaches have been developed that enhance workload balance and improve both administrative and operational processes.

The Nova project team is comprised of both sworn and civilian members across the organization with diverse backgrounds and policing experience; a variety of perspectives and knowledge is critical to cultivating innovative ideas that address emerging challenges and improve service delivery. The project team has conducted extensive evidence-based research and taken a member-led, consultative approach to identify and implement solutions to both old and new problems. These initiatives have reduced time spent on non-value added activities for officers and enhanced our ability to provide high quality service. The Nova team will continue to build upon these efforts to ensure the best use of officer skills and align policing resources where they are most valued and needed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding in the amount of \$1,616,100 is included in the 2020 Operating Budget for revenue recoveries from false alarm fees. The fees were initially designed as full cost recovery, so that the cost of a false alarm is to be incurred by the user of the service rather than taxpayers in general. Along with a stronger verification process saving up to 4,100 hours of frontline time, fewer alarm calls will be attended, resulting in annual revenue losses of up to \$700,000 or 43 percent less than prior years. In 2020, the revenue loss is expected to be partially mitigated by expenditure reductions.

The Call Diversion Unit may replace a portion of approximately \$10.9 million of existing frontline costs of responding to Priority 3 and Priority 4 calls for service. Other alternate service delivery initiatives include existing staffing costs of \$278,700 for prisoner meal delivery and \$114,200 for the arrest warrant initiative.

The 2021 Operating Budget process has been developed to reflect the impacts from the Nova modernization initiatives including the potential to mitigate or partially offset additional staffing requests.

BACKGROUND

Prisoner Meal Delivery

In 2018 alone, 2,218 hours of officer time was spent on the administrative task of prisoner meal delivery, costing YRP approximately \$266,000, excluding the cost of food. By utilizing a third party meal delivery service, YRP has not only reduced operating costs, but also realized administrative efficiencies. Most importantly, this initiative has allowed officers to focus more of their time on tasks that directly impact public safety. The new model also reduces workload for staff within the 911 Communications Call Centre.

Verified Alarm Response Program

Unverified alarm calls account for approximately 4,100 hours of officer response time, with over 5,200 separate calls dispatched each year. Historically, these calls have proven to be false 99.5 percent of the time. By implementing a program that only dispatches officers to verified alarm calls, YRP is ensuring that officer resources are deployed where they will be most valuable to our communities. The new Verified Response Program is consistent with the approach of other Ontario police services and went live on June 1, 2020.

Arrest Warrant Process

Project Nova identified that officers were spending almost 1,000 hours each year transporting warrants between our police districts and Information Management at Headquarters, at a cost of almost \$115,000. The process required an officer to be dispatched more than 500 times a year to act as a courier to transport documents. By clarifying legal requirements and utilizing technology, Project Nova introduced a new business practice that eliminates the need to physically transport paperwork, allowing officers to remain on patrol in their districts.

Call Diversion Unit

A cornerstone of Project Nova's ongoing Alternate Service Delivery Project, the Call Diversion Unit (CDU) aims to free up time for frontline officers by responding to lower priority calls for service by telephone. Implemented ahead of schedule in March 2020 as a means to decrease physical contact between officers and members of the public during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the CDU has since handled nearly 8,000 calls for service from York Region citizens. Capable of taking reports, answering questions, resolving disputes and collecting digital evidence, the CDU has handled 24 percent of all calls for service and 37 percent of Priority 3 and 4 calls. CDU officers are also proving to be very efficient at these calls, completing reports nearly 50 percent faster on average than their frontline counterparts with the elimination of both travel time and data entry from the cruiser.

Embedded CDU Crisis Worker Pilot

As part of our response to calls involving persons with mental health issues, YRP deploys a Mental Health Support Team consisting of a police officer and a Crisis Support Worker (CSW) in partnership with York Support Services Network. When COVID-19 impacted the ability of the CSW's to deploy in the community, Project Nova commenced a pilot project that placed a CSW in the CDU to respond to mental health calls by telephone, ensuring continuity of valuable mental health support services. The pilot concluded in June 2020 when CSW's were again able to attend calls in person. Between April 9, 2020 and June 23, 2020, a total of 192 calls for service were screened and determined to have a mental health component. Of those, 138 were diverted completely from the frontline (72 percent). A total of 47 calls were handled using a blended approach where the frontline assisted with part of the call. The remaining seven calls were deemed to have an immediate safety risk and a frontline response was required.

Elimination of Court After Nights for Frontline Officers

Nova conducted an in-depth review of frontline policing that looked at data from 2018 and 2019, including an evaluation of workload and wellness of frontline police officers at YRP. Through evidence-based research and member consultations, the team was able to validate and develop a solution to member concerns pertaining to attendance at court after working a night shift. The newly adopted business practice at YRP eliminates the requirement of frontline officers to remain awake for long periods of time thus reducing the high potential for risk associated to member fatigue in these circumstances. A process is now in place to schedule officers to work a mid-day shift from noon until midnight on the day prior to court, allowing officers to get sleep before travelling to court and giving testimony. In addition to enhancing officer wellness/safety, other benefits to the model include more resources available during peak call demand times and decreased overtime related to carryover time to court.

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Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request