

City of Mississauga  
**Corporate Report**



<p>Date: November 9, 2020</p> <p>To: Chair and Members of General Committee</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p>
<p>From: Shari Lichterman, CPA, CMA, Commissioner of Community Services</p>	<p>Meeting date: December 2, 2020</p>

## Subject

**Agreement with National Service Dog Training Centre Inc. (“NSD”) to provide a Service Dog to the City as an intervention strategy for mental health of Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services for a five year term.**

## Recommendation

1. That a by-law be enacted authorizing the Commissioner of Community Services and the City Clerk to execute an Agreement between National Service Dog Training Centre Inc. (“NSD”) and The Corporation of the City of Mississauga (“City”).
2. That the Agreement will provide a service dog to Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services for a term of 5 years, including such ancillary documents and amending agreements as may be required to give further effect to the intended relationship between the parties herein, all of which must be in form and content satisfactory to the City Solicitor, for the facilitation and continuation of the Facility Dog program.

## Background

Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services (MFES) have successfully completed a pilot partnership project with NSD for the facilitation and operation of a Facility Dog program as approved by General Committee (GC-0324-2019). The City will utilize the Facility Dog in addition to other wellness programs as an intervention strategy for mental health of MFES.

MFES continues to expand and develop its wellness and fitness programs based on a fire service Joint Labour Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI). The WFI resource provides fire departments with an opportunity to learn from and develop or enhance their own wellness-fitness program through Education, Training and Prevention. MFES WFI program has been providing fitness, medical and mental health services to MFES staff for 12 years. Recently much of the programming has focused around mental health for front line responders as mental health and occupational stress injuries continue to be a concern in the emergency first responder community. Supporting mental health and being a leader in first responder mental

health services is a critical piece for a total health plan. The WFI Committee is committed to reducing stigma associated with mental health including PTSD.

## Comments

Although widely used in the US and Canada in policing and victim services, NSD is the first Assistance Dogs international accredited service dog training school in Canada to launch a program targeting first responder PTSD.

This agreement will augment the existing mental health programming offered at the City to help reduce the stigma associated with mental health. The pilot project was successful - it assisted in promoting open dialogue about mental health and ultimately helping reduce the stigma associated with mental health. A facility dog is much like a therapy dog but with enhanced qualifications and training through NSD. A facility dog must pass the same public access testing a service dog would need to complete in order to be placed with an individual.

MFES has worked with NSD to complete all the conditions precedent to receiving the Facility Dog, including the necessary training to ensure proper care and utilization of the dog.

The City shall provide for all day-to-day care of the Facility Dog, including food and veterinary costs, however the Facility Dog remains the sole property of NSD and will be returned at the end of this agreement.

The dog would be scheduled to visit various MFES workplaces when requested, and can be available during regular working hours to be activated in the event of a serious incident where peer support is required.

## Financial Impact

There are no additional financial impacts resulting from the recommendations in this report. The annual costs associated with this agreement have been incorporated into the MFES operating budget.

## Conclusion

MFES is considered a leader in mental health training and programming. This agreement will ensure our continued progress towards establishing a work climate and culture that provides support to our employees.

It has been proven that mental health and occupational stress injuries occur at a higher rate in the first responder community. The integration of a facility dog program into existing mental health programming is intended to provide emotional support, breakdown communication barriers and ultimately help to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

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## Attachments

Appendix 1: Facility Dog Agreement



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Shari Lichterman, CPA, CMA, Commissioner of Community Services

Prepared by: Luigi Vernace, CPA, Acting Executive Officer MFES