Gov’t reps set to fight for police funding

BY JODI LUNDMARK
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay’s provincial and federal representatives have heard the call for help from the city’s police service and say they will be advocating for assistance from their respective levels of government.

Earlier this week, Thunder Bay Police Chief Sylvie Hauth told city council she had sent letters to both provincial and federal government representatives asking for monetary assistance to help the police service implement recommendations laid out in a report from the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, which found that systemic racism exists within the Thunder Bay Police Service.

She also asked both levels of government for more resources to address the city’s gangs, drugs and guns issues, stating that during the last three months of 2019, Thunder Bay police laid 300 charges related to gangs, guns and drugs.

Ninety-seven people were charged in that same timeframe and the majority were from out of town.

Councillors approved a nearly $1 million addition to the police service’s budget to begin work on the recommendations. Thunder Bay Atikokan MP Judith Monette-Farrell said it’s crucial the city approved that request.

“Really our percentage of spending on policing has been less than other cities of comparable size,” she said. “This report was definitely crucial to act on because we want to work towards reconciliation and not repeat the mistakes of the past.”

As a member of the official opposition party, Monette-Farrell said she has written Ontario’s minister of community safety and correctional services, Sylvia Jones, and will raise the issue in Queen’s Park.

She added the province has put money forward to the Toronto area to deal with gangs and guns and Thunder Bay is asking for its share.

Liberal MPP Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North) also said he will be advocating strongly for the province to provide funding to the Thunder Bay Police Service and said he was not surprised the city and the provincial government needed to work more closely together to address the issue.

Confederation College pre-service firefighter students, from left, Riley Tucker, Taya Stamier, and Devon Wanamakik are credited for rescuing three people from their burning home, Friday.

Students save day

Garage blaze puts firefighting lessons to the test

BY SANDI KRASOWSKI
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Three people are lucky to be alive thanks to three Confederation College pre-service firefighter students who knew what to do in the heat of the moment.

Students Taya Stamier, Riley Tucker and Devon Wanamakik were carpooling their way into the college’s fire training centre early morning when they noticed smoke coming from an attached garage at 76 Perrucroche Blvd.

“We were taught how to read smoke and we saw it was coming out quick,” said Wanamakik. “It was pretty dense and dark and had a lot of soot.”

The group knew it was time for anyone in the house to get out because the fire would quickly spread. Tucker stopped his car, rushed to the house and began pounding on the door.

“It was pretty early in the morning and you never know if people are inside sleeping and that is what we assumed,” said Wanamakik.

An older man finally opened the door. When I said they your garage is on fire, I saw the look in his eyes,” said Tucker.

To their surprise, the man rushed back into the home to an interior door that lead to the garage and smoke.

When he opened the door he let in more oxygen and that made the fire bigger and now there were flames coming out of the garage and into the house, then he shut the door,” said Tucker.

“I asked him if there was anyone in the house and he said yes,” said Tucker. “But the man instead began to fill his pockets with water to put on the fire.”

Stamier said the danger was escalating and they urged him to get out and wait for the fire trucks to come.

“I told him, ‘No, keep the door closed.’ Then he opened it again and the flames started shooting out. He finally closed the door and went outside to safety I don’t know if he understood us,” she said.

Meanwhile, Tucker decided to do a final check and retrieve the man’s shoes that were near the door when he got the shock of his life.

“I went to grab his shoes when I saw two more (people) walk down the stairs — his second baby,” said Tucker. “I thought, ‘Oh my God. Get out of here right now!’”

They finally get everyone out.

“We put them into our vehicle because it was running and warm and fire trucks began arriving,” said Stamier.

No one is more proud of the three than Shane Ferguson, the manager of the pre-service firefighter program. He said they were able to use their training in a life-saving situation.

“It’s very military here and the way we run things is you have to be here on time because training is important. You can’t miss any time,” he said, adding that tardiness is normally punished with push ups.

“There’s no push ups here today,” said Ferguson, excusing the three students for their lateness on Friday.

Thunder Bay Fire platoon chief Mark Ferriero said when fire crews arrived, they found heavy smoke and flames coming from the garage. Ferguson said damage in the garage was pretty extensive and the house suffered moderate smoke damage.

No one was hurt in the incident.