



FUNDING REPORT

2023 – 2025

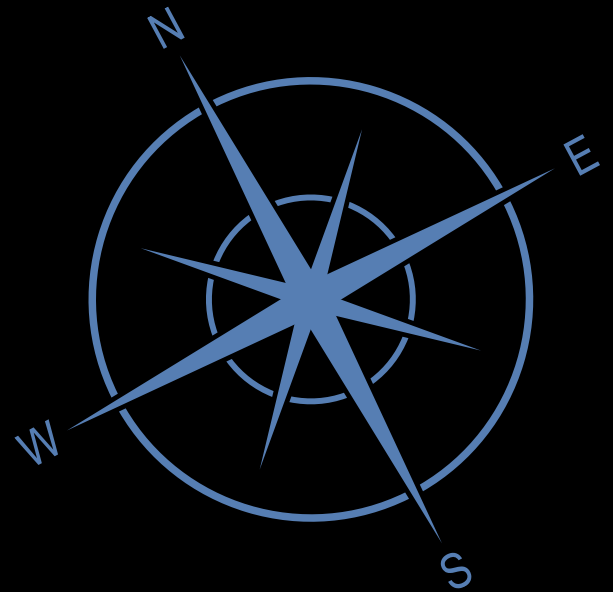


**Reflecting on our journey,
crafting our future.**

September 2025

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president's message



Brian Carriere SAR Alberta President

Over the past year, SAR Alberta has taken significant steps to strengthen our capability and coordination across the province.

With the Government of Alberta's continued support through the equipment grant, training grant, and sustained funding for operations, these investments have translated into tangible improvements that directly enhance public safety.

Our member teams are as engaged as they've ever been and some, which were fairly inactive, have become quite active over the last two years, thanks to more provincial supports in place.

Through numerous advancements, SAR Alberta has built a stronger, more connected and more capable search and rescue network — ready to respond anywhere, anytime, for the people of Alberta.

“ —

“The Alberta RCMP is proud of our strong partnership with Search and Rescue Alberta. By working together, we bring the dedication of highly trained volunteers and the resources of law enforcement to ensure timely, coordinated responses when people need help the most.”

*~ RCMP Inspector CJ Blize,
Officer in Charge, K Division Air
Services*

message from the CEO



John Alexander
SAR Alberta CEO

The achievements outlined in this report bring me great pride — it is wonderful to reflect on two years of incredible progress.

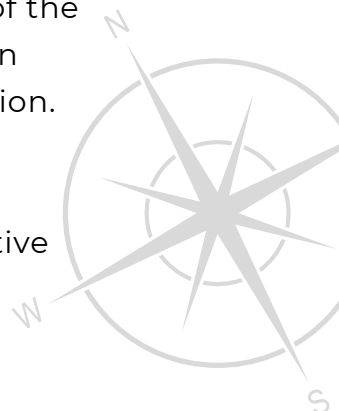
It is also a pleasure to acknowledge and appreciate the people who worked alongside us and trusted us to provide our members with the tools, support and advice to further their ability to do what they do best — save lives, ease suffering, bring hope and provide closure.

Our journey is not complete

SAR Alberta is focused and driven by a vision for a safe, unified and effective search and rescue community that is valued by the public and government. To all of our partners, we look forward to continued progress together. To those whom we have not collaborated with or served yet — we would be honoured if you reached out.

To the Government of Alberta, thank you for the collaboration and the funding over the past two years and for your commitment to the coming years. Most importantly, thank you for your trust and for your recent public acknowledgements of the important work that our highly trained volunteer professionals take on in support of search, rescue, recovery, disaster response and public education.

You've placed your trust in SAR Alberta and we can assure you that your investment will continue to pay off as our partnership has a lasting positive impact on public safety in our proud province.



executive summary

Key accomplishments

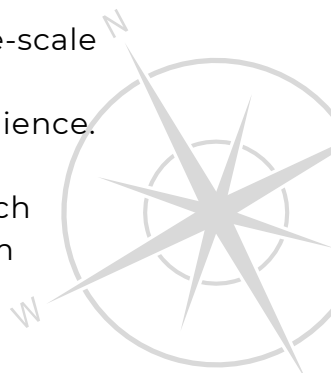
This funding report covers the following three separate grants from the Government of Alberta.

- SAR Grant (2023-2025, \$3,000,000)
- Training Grant (2024-2025, \$150,000)
- Equipment Grant (2024-2025, \$500,000)



These grants directly supported the development and implementation of the following initiatives:

- **Better equipped teams:** Standardized, mission-ready gear distributed province-wide, improving efficiency, interoperability and safety.
- **Improved operational collaboration:** Enhanced operational collaboration with agencies and SAR teams, starting with one-call dispatch.
- **Province-wide satellite communications:** Ensuring reliable connectivity in the most remote environments, closing long-standing operational gaps.
- **Provincial operational safety program:** Establishing a consistent safety framework to reduce risks and protect volunteers during missions.
- **Geomatics and mapping capability:** Providing advanced, centralized tools for terrain analysis, search planning and real-time updates.
- **Enhanced disaster response capacity:** Expanding readiness for large-scale emergencies such as wildfires, floods and multi-agency deployments, ensuring SAR Alberta remains a key partner in provincial disaster resilience.
- **Mental wellness support:** Invested more resources into programs such as *Before Operational Stress*, an empirically-rooted resiliency program which supports psychological health and wellness.



what drives us forward



Vision

A safe, unified and effective search and rescue community in the province of Alberta that is valued by the public and government.

Mission

To empower and represent the search and rescue community in Alberta by providing an exemplary level of service so others may live.

“ —

“On behalf of the friends and family of David Haycock, we want to thank you for your time, compassion, and most of all, the empathy that you displayed while the search took place. We are eternally grateful for your efforts and want to thank you for restoring our faith in humanity.”

~ Erik and Laryssa Haycock (in an email sent to Rocky Mountain House SAR)

before and after funding

	BEFORE 24 mos. prior to PSES funding	AFTER 24 mos. with PSES funding
Active Members	719	1,242 (+73%)
New Members	243	534 (+120%)
Number of Incidents	606	874 (+44%)
Member Hours Responding	26,985	50,361 (+87%)
Member Hours Training	95,914	135,116 (+41%)
Member Hours Events	62,409	110,370 (+77%)
Member Hours Total	185,308	295,847 (+60%)

new provincial infrastructure



One Call system

The One Call system is a process whereby any tasking agency can call one number and be connected to either disaster response, search, rescue and recovery or, as a SAR team, they can request additional resources.

Operated by the STARS Emergency Link Centre (ELC) in partnership with SAR Alberta, One Call lines are recorded and answered by highly trained emergency communication specialists (ECS).

90%+ success rate

In addition to tasking requests, SAR Alberta member teams can also use the One Call system for additional resource requests such as:

- Provincial response coordinators
- SAR management advice
- Geomatics mapping team
- Coordination of mutual aid resources and more

Using One Call, we have accomplished a 90%+ success rate (live find, rescue or recovery) for callouts that made use of this new provincial infrastructure.

tasking agency relationship building

Connections that speed up response

Throughout 2024, SAR Alberta worked hard to streamline an efficient and effective relationship at the provincial level between SAR Alberta and our primary tasking agency, the RCMP.

This enhanced relationship has led to more deployments province-wide, a focus on getting SAR deployed quicker than ever before and an improved province-wide expense claim process for SAR teams.

There is still work to be done to support our teams at the detachment level and to continue to improve our provincial processes but the results so far have produced more SAR taskings, more disaster response support, faster deployment times as well as the statistics that prove our success.

Data from Q1 2025 saw members enroute to an incident, on average, approximately 30 minutes from receipt of the call.



“ —

"As the previous Bronze DEOC wildfire commander, having the support of SARAB was a game changer for the RCMP's response.

Ongoing collaborative discussions throughout the wildfire season allowed for timely information sharing, resource and tasking efficiencies, which provided an increase to public safety." ~ RCMP Inspector Chris Romanchych

disaster response program



DR program receives international attention

Although search and rescue has been providing disaster response (DR) for decades, recently we've adopted a streamlined provincial approach to it under a federally-funded project and also with the provincial government's support. This combination of support has allowed us to grow and improve this program on an annual basis.

SAR-DR website launched

Our disaster response program is becoming world-renowned, recently drawing significant praise and inquiries at an international SAR conference in Iceland. Closer to home, we launched a specific [SAR-DR website](#) to better inform Alberta municipalities and the general public.

In 2024, one of the major accomplishments of this program was the decision by the RCMP to allow SAR to take the lead for the very successful and efficient wildfire evacuation of the town of Jasper. (Read an insightful [case study](#) on this evacuation.)

Many other communities have also received SAR-DR support for evacuations and other DR-related needs over past years, including many remote and Indigenous communities.



minimizing geographic gaps

Our efforts continue to best support remote areas of the province and we welcome collaboration with agencies, municipalities and government.

While some communities are very remote with more challenging access, we have worked to identify geographic gaps, especially in the north. The following initiatives detail our efforts so far to address this.

Outcomes to date

- **New team formed:** A SAR group has been stood up in La Crete and is in its infancy as they await training and an agreement with the Government of Alberta.
- **New capacity:** Fort McMurray SAR has worked with the community of Fort Chipewyan to build SAR awareness and to identify community liaisons to support future SAR efforts, while SAR Alberta has supported with some funding for equipment, training and travel.
- **Increased activity:** The Calling Lake SAR team has become much more active with provincial support and has now built capacity in the underserved areas of Red Earth Creek, Peerless Trout and Wabasca.



key initiatives



Occupational health & safety

SAR Alberta developed a suite of provincial OH&S SOPs, hazard/risk assessment documents and tools (including a new web/mobile application).

In the fall of 2025, we plan on building a provincial health and safety committee, as well as putting a provincial program in place to support teams that don't have their own robust programs.

We intend to work through late 2025 into 2026 to build out the new provincial SOPs for all things SAR and disaster response.



Standardized training and support

A standardized provincial *Search and Rescue Basics* curriculum has been written and is being rolled out in the fall of 2025 inclusive of training and equipment supports for teams.

SAR Alberta also hosted 16 provincial courses with anywhere from 12-65 members benefiting from each course.

This number does not include locally-run courses using instructors trained with support from SAR Alberta and also does not include multi-team courses run by local teams, with funding support from SAR Alberta.

key initiatives (continued)

13



Field communications

Field communications and interoperability has been a key focus over the funded period.

- A provincial **radio committee** was struck.
- **New radio frequencies** were made available to our SAR teams.
- **Standardized radios** were recently purchased and we'll begin programming them and rolling them out to teams who need them the most.
- **Starlink units** were purchased for all SAR teams, with SAR Alberta also funding annual subscriptions – this initiative has proven to save lives!
- Teams that already possessed Starlink units received **Garmin GPS units** instead, with funding for inReach subscriptions.



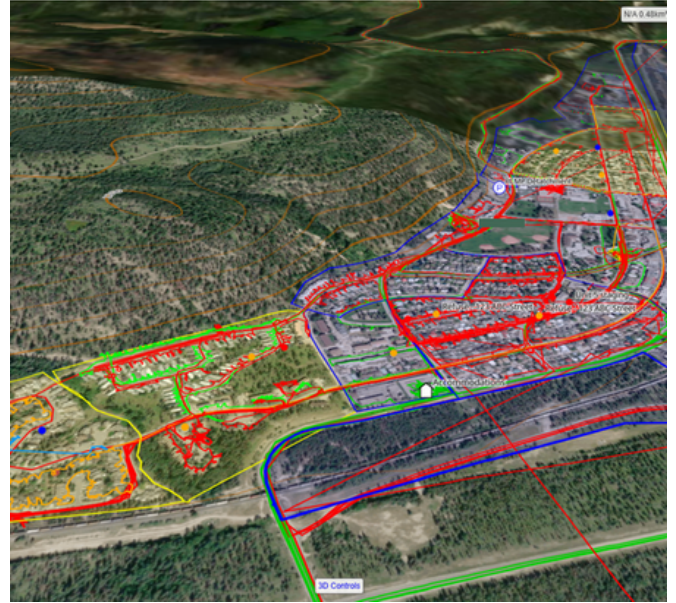
key initiatives (continued)

Geomatics mapping team

A provincial geomatics team was stood up using CalTopo software (licenses were purchased for all SAR members). SAR Alberta also worked with CalTopo to secure large discounts for teams.

The geomatics team has supported provincial operations extensively, with 1-2 members often available within minutes of any request for support including to:

- Build access/egress maps
- Build out maps of search areas
- Track member movement
- Map out evacuation routes and track progress
- Map out wildfire activity using near-live satellite tracking
- Map out helicopter landing zones



Tracking during Jasper wildfire evacuation

Highest performing social media post ever

The effort to provide an accessible landing zone by the geomatics team ended up becoming not only a win for the subject who was safely rescued but also for SAR Alberta's social media effort.

This [Facebook post](#) became SAR Alberta's highest performing post ever.

42,000
Views

64
Shares

784
Reactions

15
Comments

key initiatives (continued)

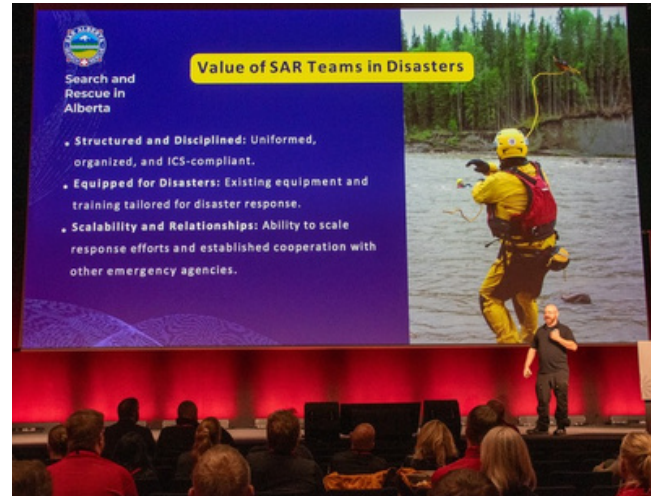


All teams weekend

We have successfully hosted two all teams meetings (one funded by the province), with another coming up October 18-19, 2025, in Edmonton.

The 2024 meeting had approximately 170 members in attendance (and nearly all member teams represented) for a weekend of training and networking.

There were also six First Nations in attendance as well as a number of key partners including tasking agencies and government. Many thanks to Government of Alberta for its attendance and remarks.



Conference presence

SAR Alberta has attended and/or presented at national and international conferences/symposia in Newfoundland, Iceland, New Zealand, and the United States.

We will also have a presence at SARScene 2025 in Ottawa and the Canadian Association of Wilderness Medicine conference in Canmore.



"Amazing job, it really is noticeable that you are creating a group of professionals." ~SAR survey comment

key initiatives (continued)



SAR prevention education

SAR Alberta has hosted two provincial preventative SAR workshops for outdoor educators with plans to host more. We continue to deliver hundreds of hours of preventative SAR education throughout the province with thousands of members of the public in attendance.

With support from the Government of Alberta, we've also begun having a presence at major tradeshow/outdoor shows where we promote the work of search and rescue but also take the opportunity to deliver preventative SAR education to the public.



membership survey results



Methodology

The 2025 SAR Alberta 45-question membership survey was created using Google Forms, with the form link emailed directly to all of our members (approximately 1,400 at the time).

In addition to answering questions, we also offered the ability for participants to provide comments.

The information provided by the survey respondents has proven valuable in helping to guide our efforts and, through SAR statistics, shed light on future needs.

Results

The [results of this survey](#) are available as a PowerPoint PDF.

“

“I believe that search and rescue operations, as a whole, have made significant advancements in professionalism and organization over the past year and a half.”

~SAR survey comment

board governance



Collaborative work to benefit search and rescue

The board of SAR Alberta has taken on a number of important governance initiatives including:

- Finalizing a new 3-year strategic plan
- Working to update organizational structure and bylaws

The board has also supported our member teams through the following:

- Building a provincial support network and structure
- Developing and enhancing standards
- Advocating for our membership
- Reviewing and approving policies
- Forming and supporting committees
- Ensuring our experts play a role in enhancing the professionalism of SAR

Throughout this, we've also worked extensively and collaboratively with the PSES provincial SAR coordinator on grant agreements, WCB items, health and safety improvements, new member agreements, operational updates, reports, committee representation and more.

team engagement



General awareness

- Delivered a number of presentations to municipalities, tasking agencies and the Rural Municipalities Association (RMA)
- Improved the current [SAR Alberta website](#)
- Created new [disaster response site](#)



"Thanks for all you do! I feel very optimistic about the future of SAR Alberta. The world is watching and you are delivering. Keep it up!" ~ SAR survey comment

Support activities

- **Hosted a large-scale multi-agency mock SAR-DR exercise** with approximately 200 people in attendance for the training. As part of the exercise, we appreciated the attendance of Minister Loewen.
- **Supported teams with their mock exercises** including a multi-team mock search in Dinosaur Provincial Park and a multi-team/multi-agency mock disaster exercise in Hinton
- **Supported team training and equipment needs** when the equipment and training grant funds didn't meet the demand
- **Provided multi-hour team meetings** with all of our member teams, with 94% receiving an in-person consultation
- **Created new members web portal** for easy access to forms/documents and a fully stocked file library
- **Replaced PDFs with online forms** for some applications (ongoing)
- **Provided free access** to online courses, licences and software
- **Customized fact sheets** for awareness and recruitment use

equipment grant



Gear for good

Our [\\$500,000 equipment grant](#) was expended through winter 2024/spring 2025 with all funds exhausted.

As the first grant received from the Government of Alberta exclusively for equipment, it was met with enthusiasm from the SAR community.

Twenty teams from across the province benefited with purchases covering OHVs, medical transportation and supplies, rescue gear, radios and other life-saving equipment.

Oversubscribed

This grant was oversubscribed by \$400,000+ (funding requests received amounted to more than \$900,000).

SAR Alberta was able to fund some of the overages through another Government of Alberta grant. We have also received a new \$500,000 equipment grant to roll out in fall 2025.

A full listing of teams and their purchases can be found [here](#).

training grant

Using this training grant, our search and rescue teams hosted 34 training courses, helping members receive training in a variety of skills. A full listing of which teams participated and the type of training they received can be found [here](#).



Training grant summary

At the provincial level, 339 members benefitted from 16 courses, with most other members benefitting from local-level training, provincial all teams training or various regional mock exercises.

A provincial certification process was also implemented, ensuring SAR members respond with a common skillset. Development of a recruit training course is well underway; this program will ensure SAR members receive a standardized basic training program.

More than 50 members received instructor training which allows SAR teams to rely less on external contractors. Finally, training was provided to SAR members to develop preventive SAR presentation skills for use with the public.

ride along with SAR

How multiple SAR teams responded to a real call for a missing child

"Subject last seen at 8 p.m. Left residence via back door, suspected northwest heading. Wearing blue jeans and a blue jacket."

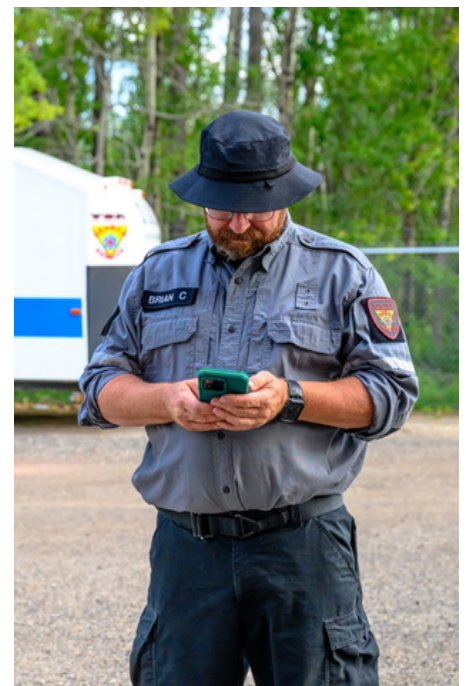
This brief, sterile message was the catalyst for volunteer search and rescue members to transition from their personal lives into a highly trained and dedicated operational team. The call initiated a coordinated response that alerted teams across the province, prompting our members to leave their loved ones and head into the night to work as one, ensuring others may live.

A Coordinated Response: The Case of May 11, 2025

At 11:50 p.m. on May 11, 2025, Grande Prairie Technical Search and Rescue (GPTSR) received this very call. The subject was a two-and-a-half-year-old boy. The initial information prompted not just a local response but a provincial one as well.

When any SAR team in Alberta receives a call for help, they don't light just one candle. They light a beacon, which triggers many more to be lit across the province.

In this instance, the beacon reached SAR teams and SAR on-call resources in Grande Prairie, Valleyview, Slave Lake, Hinton, Edmonton, Sundre, Cochrane, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. Our continually evolving operations system ensures that no single team is left without support and, most importantly, no missing person faces the darkness alone.



Story continues on next page

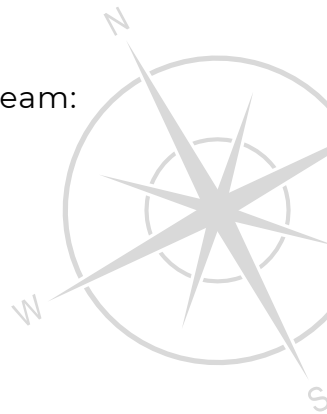
ride along with **SAR** (continued)

Missing child found alive

Upon receiving the call, GPTSR contacted the SAR Alberta volunteer duty officer, who immediately formed a volunteer virtual incident response team. This allowed GPTSR to focus entirely on mustering their equipment and driving to the location, while the virtual team handled critical tasks remotely.

Within 30 minutes, and with no loss of travel time for GPTSR, the virtual team:

- Dispatched a local helicopter with a SAR observer.
- Dispatched Greenview SAR and placed other teams on pre-alert.
- Reviewed and confirmed a lost person behavior profile.
- Created an online interactive map for all resources.



When GPTSR arrived, they were welcomed by the RCMP as the subject matter experts (as all SAR teams are). They were handed full control of an incident where initial tasks had already been completed or were underway. Approximately 200 local community members also worked under the leadership of search and rescue to support the effort.

The virtual team continued to provide support and monitoring from a distance but the most important SAR resources, those on the ground, moved immediately into action. This coordination was complex but a system was in place to make it happen.

The result of this coordinated effort was a successful outcome: the young boy was **located alive by SAR** and brought home. The boy was spotted by SAR personnel in the helicopter, who then met him on the ground and transported him to the staging area where he was assessed by a SAR medic before being returned home safely to his grateful family.

This success is a direct result of the funding received in 2023, along with support from partners like RCMP and STARS air ambulance. These resources have enabled us to implement a seamless, province-wide response system.

one voice, one message

“ —

“Working directly with Search and Rescue Alberta over the last year and a half has been a highly productive and enjoyable experience.

SAR Alberta and the Alberta RCMP Operational Readiness and Response Unit have dialed in a unified focus on providing the best overhead management for provincial search and rescue operations while improving on consistency in operations and fiscal management across all categories of the program.

Having a unified concept of operations has allowed SAR Alberta and the RCMP to work seamlessly, not only with each other but also with our mutual partners, allowing us to gain a one voice, one message approach to operations as they occur.

Moving forward, I am certain that the search and rescue program in Alberta will continue to grow in all areas of discipline and under that growth will be the foundation that we together have forged and cemented over the last 18 months.

Thank you to all of the SAR community in Alberta. The work that has been put in by each team and the rescues we have seen performed across the province have truly been impressive and inspiring.”

Cpl. Drew Taylor – RCMP Search and Rescue Coordinator

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