

## OVERVIEW AND UPDATE ON EMERGENCY 9-1-1 ACT

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 2013 April 10, the Government of Alberta (GoA) introduced Bill 15: Emergency 9-1-1 Act. The Act and its regulations are expected to come into force 2014 April 01. Council was advised of the legislation in a memo to Council in 2013 April.

The legislation will help address challenges facing Alberta's 9-1-1 call centres in the following ways:

- establishment of a wireless 9-1-1 levy;
- support for integrating Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) technology;
- development of province-wide standards;
- more legal protection for call centres; and
- penalties for frivolous 9-1-1 calls.

The wireless 9-1-1 levy of 44 cents per month is a long-awaited and critically needed source of funding. The dedicated funding will support 9-1-1 call centres in enhancing their existing capacity to ensure reliable 9-1-1 services continue to be provided to citizens despite an ever-increasing number of calls and growing percentage of complex calls requiring new technology.

It is estimated there are 2.7 million cell phone subscriptions in Alberta. The levy is anticipated to raise a total provincial funding pool of \$17.9 million in 2014/15, of which \$14.2 million will be distributed to Alberta's Public Safety Answer Points. Calgary's Public Safety Communications projected funding is anticipated at around \$3.4 million annually. With 2014 funding not expected to be received until July, projected funding for this year is currently estimated at \$1.5M.

### ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Direct that the 2014 wireless 9-1-1 funding, currently estimated at \$1.5M, be held in the *9-1-1 Communications Centre Capital Financing Reserve*.

### RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES, DATED 2014 APRIL 02:

That the Administration Recommendations contained in Report CPS2014-0255 be approved.

### PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2012 September 24, Council adopted Alderman Mar's NM2012-39, 9-1-1 Act, directing Administration to report back through Intergovernmental Affairs Committee no later than 2012 November, with a progress update on the wireless 9-1-1 fee remission issue; and that Council requests that the Mayor write a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, requesting advancement of the 9-1-1 Act in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

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In response to Council's direction on NM2012-39, 9-1-1 Act, Mayor Nenshi sent a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs in 2012 October requesting the opportunity to work with the GoA, to develop and enact legislation compelling telecommunication providers to remit wireless 9-1-1 fees to the province for distribution to PSAPs throughout Alberta.

On 2012 November 19, Council adopted IGA2012-0741 Progress Update on Proposed 9-1-1 Act, directing Administration to update Council, through the SPC on Community and Protective Services on significant developments in the advancement of a 9-1-1 Act.

The advocacy done by the Mayor and City Council over the last six years and their support and understanding of the importance of this funding for The City of Calgary and its citizens has helped to bring this funding to fruition.

Attachment 1 contains more information on Previous Council Direction.

### **BACKGROUND**

In Calgary, the 9-1-1 call centre, also known as a Public Safety Answer Point (PSAP), is managed by Public Safety Communications (PSC). The City of Calgary's PSC is the largest PSAP in Alberta and one of the largest in Canada in terms of call volumes and population served. PSC answers 9-1-1 calls from Calgary and surrounding areas, facilitates the transfer of a portion of these calls to secondary Public Safety Answering Points, and dispatches the appropriate Fire, Police and/or Emergency Medical Services (EMS) first responder agency to the calls.

Several trends have become evident in recent years: increase in total number of 9-1-1 calls received (emergency and non-emergency); growing percentage of calls being emergency; and growing percentage of calls originating from cell phones.

Since 2009 PSC has experienced a 7 per cent increase in the total number of calls received. Almost one million calls (emergency and non-emergency) were answered in 2013. This increase is consistent with population growth and reflective of the increased number of citizens who use cell phones. This trend is forecasted to continue based on a growing population.

Emergency calls are more complex and time consuming than non-emergency. Of the one million calls answered in 2013, nearly 500,000 were emergency – an increase of 15 percent since 2009. The number of non-emergency calls decreased 5 per cent over the same time period.

In addition to steadily increasing call volumes, PSC is also dealing with growing complexity in terms of advancing technology. In 2013, 67 per cent of the approximate 500,000 emergency calls originated from cell phones.

The use of cell phones and other mobile devices allow callers to contact 9-1-1 from anywhere. This is challenging when attempting to confirm the location of an emergency, placing demands on staff time and contributing to call duration.

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Currently, every landline in Calgary contributes 44 cents per month to support 9-1-1 services. PSC received \$3.3 million in landline fees in 2013. As landline use decreases, fee revenues also decrease. Until now, there has been no financial support from wireless service providers despite equitable service provision to all users.

Since 2003, The City of Calgary (The City) has been exploring options to require telecommunications companies to remit wireless 9-1-1 fees to PSAPs. Six provinces in Canada already have Acts and regulations requiring same. While subscribers in Alberta have paid 9-1-1 fees to their wireless service providers, these funds have been used by the providers to cover their own costs associated with providing access to 9-1-1 services, rather than remitting the fees directly to the 9-1-1 operation centres.

Over the years, The City has made several attempts to enter into negotiations with wireless service providers. In the spring of 2011, Administration met with the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs, to advocate for the enactment of legislation requiring wireless providers to remit wireless 9-1-1 fees to the province for distribution to PSAPs in Alberta. The Mayor also raised this matter directly with the Minister of Municipal Affairs in late spring 2012.

### INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

On 2013 January 17, the GoA announced its plans to introduce new supports for 9-1-1 call centres with proposed legislation bringing the Province of Alberta in line with several other provinces. The proposed changes are intended to provide support to 9-1-1 call centres within the existing framework of local service delivery and include:

- Ensuring equity among phone users in contributing to the cost of 9-1-1 services;
- Providing 9-1-1 call centres with more legal protection;
- Supporting 9-1-1 call centres' efforts to integrate "next generation" 9-1-1 technology like GPS and texting; and
- Creating penalties for prank or frivolous calls to 9-1-1.

On 2013 April 10, the GoA introduced *Bill 15: Emergency 9-1-1 Act* (the Bill) in the Alberta Legislature. Bill 15 is sponsored by Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs, Greg Weadick.

### Key Components of Bill 15

The legislation will help address challenges facing Alberta's 9-1-1 call centres with five key components:

1. 9-1-1 Levy
  - The new wireless 9-1-1 Levy is 44 cents per month, the same as the landline fee.
  - The levy will be charged on any wireless subscription for a device that can contact 9-1-1 and will take effect on 2014 April 01.
2. Standards and Legal Protection
  - The Government of Alberta will work with stakeholders to create standard processes and procedures for 9-1-1 call taking. This will ensure consistent 9-1-1 service delivery across the province.
  - Better legal protection for 9-1-1 centres.
3. Penalties for frivolous 9-1-1 calls.

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- A frivolous 9-1-1 call is any 9-1-1 call deliberately made to waste time or abuse the service.
  - \$5,000 fine for first time offenders.
4. New Technology
- 9-1-1 call centres need support as they look for ways to introduce new technology.

The components of Bill 15 will enhance PSC's ability to continue to provide quality service to citizens. The province-wide standards, which will include business continuity and training aspects, will be developed in phases in consultation with all PSAPs to ensure that they reflect the needs and realities of Alberta's 9-1-1 system. The 9-1-1 levy will help to prepare PSC for the future. We know that the implementation of a Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) system is imminent and will be a crucial change to the way that all 9-1-1 centres operate. While guidelines regarding the use of the 9-1-1 levy funds have not yet been finalized, information received to date points towards using the monies for the implementation of technology that directly supports PSAP activities.

### Opportunities for Public Safety Communications

Given Public Safety Communications is the largest Public Safety Answer Point in Alberta, in 2013 April a letter was sent by the Mayor to the Minister of Municipal Affairs providing several recommendations outlining how PSC can support subsequent regulations, including:

- Providing opportunities for The City to participate in the development of the 9-1-1 levy funding allocation model to PSAPs;
- Providing opportunities for municipalities and other stakeholders to be consulted in the development of subsequent regulations, and provincial standards, guidelines and policies in respecting 9-1-1 services; and
- Advancing the development of the subsequent regulations including the designation of emergency response service dispatchers as an *essential service* in the same manner as fire, police and ambulance.

### 9-1-1 Levy

The wireless 9-1-1 levy is a long-awaited, and much needed source of funding to support PSAPs. The levy is anticipated to raise a total provincial funding pool of \$17.9 million in 2014/15, of which \$14.2 million will be distributed to PSAPS. While the funding allocation for distribution to 9-1-1 call centres has not yet been communicated by the GoA, PSC anticipates that funding to its centre will be approximately \$3.4 million annually. With 2014 funding not expected to be received until July, projected funding for this year is currently estimated at \$1.5M.

### Dedicated Funding for PSC

The new wireless 9-1-1 fee will be an important source of funding required to support PSC. With the rise of new personal communication devices, PSC recognizes the need to keep up with and modernize public safety system technology to continue to provide high quality and reliable 9-1-1 services to citizens.

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On 2013 January 24 the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) directed all wireless service providers to make the changes required in their system to support the provision of Text with 9-1-1 (T9-1-1) services for the deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired community by 2014 January 24. PSAPs were urged to make the changes in their systems as expeditiously as possible thereafter to enable the provision of this service to this underserved community. The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTA) and its wireless carrier members announced on 2014 January 24 their readiness to implement the T9-1-1 service for the deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired community in Canada. PSC has been working over the past year to update infrastructure and systems to be able to offer T9-1-1 services to this community. On 2014 March 24, PSC officially launched its T9-1-1 service, making PSC the second PSAP in Canada and the first in Alberta to offer the service, thereby improving accessibility to 9-1-1 for the deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired community. Currently, for citizens who are not deaf, hard of hearing or do not have speech impairments, a telephone call is still the only way to receive assistance during an emergency situation. Implementing NG9-1-1 technology will provide improved access to 9-1-1 for all citizens via voice and text, while also allowing for the sending and receiving of video and photographic information. NG9-1-1 is envisioned to enable access to 9-1-1 anytime, anywhere, for anyone, on any device.

The annual wireless 9-1-1 allocation received by PSC will be an important step in modernizing the public safety system. The preliminary estimate of the annual wireless 9-1-1 allocations to PSC is approximately \$3.4 million. Through initial scoping, NG9-1-1 capabilities will have considerable costs. In an effort to lead the way in adopting these technologies PSC is developing a comprehensive technology strategy designed to proactively plan for and manage the considerable capital and operating costs associated for NG9-1-1 readiness.

Administration therefore recommends that Council direct the 2014 allocation of wireless 9-1-1 funding, currently estimated at \$1.5M, be held in the *9-1-1 Communication Centre Capital Financing Reserve*. These funds will support establishing the foundation of an NG9-1-1 system beginning with an upgraded phone system capable of receiving much more than just voice transmissions. Over the coming year, PSC will start to plan for the adoption and integration of this new technology. While the full costs of implementing this new system are not yet known, they are expected to be significant. Therefore it is prudent to set aside funds generated from the levy in 2014 to begin the procurement process.

### **Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication**

In order to effectively maintain high levels of service on emergency and non-emergency call response, PSC works with its partners on an ongoing basis to pursue new collaborative opportunities and continue to enhance service delivery.

PSC also conducts annual citizen satisfaction research. In 2013, 97 per cent of 9-1-1 callers surveyed indicated they were satisfied with the service they received; representing the sixth consecutive year citizen satisfaction has exceeded 90 per cent. In addition, 97 per cent of Calgarians believe 9-1-1 service is important to them and 93 per cent believe that 9-1-1 is essential to their quality of life.

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This report was prepared in consultation with the Calgary Fire Department, the Calgary Police Service and the PSC Board of Governors.

### Strategic Alignment

The recommendations in this report align with Council's Fiscal Plan for Calgary 2012-2014: *"Ensuring every Calgarian lives in a safe community and has the opportunity to succeed."*

### Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Citizens expect The City to respond to emergency and non-emergency calls in an efficient, timely manner and are well served when responses are effectively coordinated. The new wireless 9-1-1 fee will be an important source of funding towards upgrading and maintaining emergency communications systems to ensure these expectations continue to be met.

### Financial Capacity

#### Current and Future Operating Budget:

There are no impacts to current operating budgets related to this report.

#### Current and Future Capital Budget:

PSC's business is highly dependent on infrastructure and technology systems. Based on the need to fund capital improvements and emergency communications system maintenance and upgrades, the *9-1-1 Communication Centre Capital Financing Reserve* was established. This reserve is currently funded through the 9-1-1 landline cost recovery program and serves to support the continued capital requirements of PSC. The wireless 9-1-1 fees are critical to the sustainability of PSC's capital plan, particularly as landline revenues decline and cell phone call volume increases. Administration is recommending the 2014 allocation of funding from the wireless 9-1-1 fee, currently estimated to be \$1.5M, be held in the *9-1-1 Communication Centre Capital Financing Reserve*. Future plans for funding will be brought forward as part of Action Plan 2015-2018.

### Risk Assessment

Directing the 2014 wireless 9-1-1 funding to be held in the *9-1-1 Communication Centre Capital Financing Reserve* is a proactive approach to mitigate the future costs required to adopt and implement critical technology including NG9-1-1. PSC's priority capital requirements are updated regularly through the Emergency Response Infrastructure Investment Plan (ERIIP) intake process; a comprehensive foundation to long-term strategic capital planning, minimizing the risks on service delivery, while increasing the effectiveness of City assets.

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**REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):**

Public Safety Communications provides essential call evaluation and dispatch services for police, fire and medical functions. The wireless 9-1-1 fee is an important new source of funding dedicated to support 9-1-1 call centres. With emergency call volumes expected to continue to rise due to a growing population, the annual wireless 9-1-1 allocation received by PSC will be essential for investment in technology upgrades, including Next Generation 9-1-1, modernizing the public safety system and enabling PSC to continue to provide effective communications to first responders and quality service to citizens.

**ATTACHMENT**

Previous Council Direction