

UPDATE ON EMERGENCY 9-1-1 ACT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 2014 April 01, following provincial advocacy efforts by Council and other key stakeholders, Bill 15: *Emergency 9-1-1 Act* was enacted. The Act requires wireless service providers to collect a 9-1-1 levy of 44 cents per month on all wireless devices able to contact 9-1-1. The funds are then distributed via a provincial grant to 9-1-1 call centres throughout the province. Following the previous update to Council on the *Emergency 9-1-1 Act* in 2014 April, the Government of Alberta began distributing funds from the grant program to The City of Calgary's Public Safety Communications (PSC), with \$4.4M in funding projected annually and \$3.4M collected in 2015 to date. With 68 per cent of PSC's 500,000 emergency calls originating from cell phones in 2014, and land line use and its associated PSC revenue on the decline, the grant funding represents a key means of partially addressing PSC's significant capital needs.

This information report provides an update on the provincial *Emergency 9-1-1 Act* grant program guidelines, an overview of key current and future PSC capital projects funded through the grant (Attachment 3), and a summary of ongoing advocacy efforts with other levels of government and the telecommunications industry to ensure the sustainable long-term funding of the PSC. As the *Emergency 9-1-1 Act* has been enacted, and The City is receiving funding under it, this report also fulfils the reporting obligation set out in the 2012 November 19 report, IGA2012-0741, which directed Administration to update Council through the SPC on Community and Protective Services on significant developments in the advancement of a 9-1-1 Act.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Community and Protective Services recommends that Council receive this report for information, as the final update on significant developments in the advancement of a 9-1-1 Act, as it was enacted 2014 April 01.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2014 April 28, Council received for information an update on the provincial Emergency 9-1-1 Act and directed Administration:

- 1) 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*; and;
- 2) To continue to pursue advocacy efforts with the Province regarding sustainable funding from telecommunications providers and other sources, and in support of other federal and provincial policy and regulatory changes that would contribute to improved 9-1-1 services to Calgarians.

Attachment 1 contains additional Previous Council Direction for reference.

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 9-1-1 call centre 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 and dispatches the appropriate Fire, Police and/or Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies to both emergency and non-emergency calls.

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In 2014 PSC answered one million calls, including approximately 500,000 emergency calls. Since 2009, emergency call volumes have steadily increased, up 16 per cent during that timeframe, while the percentage of those calls originating from cell phones has climbed to 68 per cent. At the same time, the number of households with landlines has decreased, resulting in a decrease in the associated 9-1-1 landline levy revenues. To address this funding challenge, Council, PSC and other stakeholders advocated for provincial legislation requiring wireless phone companies to remit wireless 9-1-1 fees to 9-1-1 call centres to ensure quality service to citizens. These advocacy efforts culminated in the Government of Alberta's development of Bill 15: *Emergency 9-1-1 Act*, effective 2014 April 01. The primary provision of the Act is a 9-1-1 levy of 44 cents per month on any wireless device that can be used to contact 9-1-1, intended to contribute towards the funding of 9-1-1 service for citizens across the province.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Emergency 9-1-1 Act Grant Program

With the enactment of the *Emergency 9-1-1 Act* and its regulations on 2014 April 01, the Government of Alberta has been collecting wireless 9-1-1 fees from telecommunications providers and has distributed these funds to 9-1-1 call centres across Alberta through a provincial grant program. In practice, the telecommunications industry bills its wireless device subscribers for the 9-1-1 levy each month, keeping a portion of the fee to cover any associated administrative costs. The levy is then submitted to the province for distribution to 9-1-1 call centres through the Alberta 911 Grant Program, provided the call centres meet a number of specific requirements. These include compliance with a list of grant eligible expenses, mainly related to capital and service enhancement.

In addition, each 9-1-1 call centre is required to submit an annual application and submit quarterly statements of funding and expenditures to access the grant. The amount of funds distributed is determined by both call volumes and population. For The City of Calgary PSC this corresponds to approximately \$4.4M annually in funding, as PSC handles approximately 30 per cent of provincial 9-1-1s call and serves approximately 25 per cent of the provincial population.

PSC Projects Utilizing Wireless 9-1-1 Grant Funding

As a means of ensuring PSC can deliver on its mandate to provide responsive emergency 9-1-1 services and address the approximately one million calls it receives annually, continual enhancement of capital infrastructure is required. This includes an investment in new systems to keep pace with advancements in modern communications technology, including new wireless and communications devices offering capabilities such as text and video messaging.

PSC has developed a *Future State Strategic Technology Plan* and has begun investing its wireless 9-1-1 grant funds in a number of key PSC capital projects, including critical technology upgrades and planned disaster response projects. As of 2015 July, PSC has received \$3.4M of the anticipated \$4.4M in annual funding, which will provide partial funding for the current and planned PSC projects described in Attachment 3.

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Continued Advocacy Efforts

While the Alberta 911 Grant Program represents an important source of funding for PSC moving forward, PSC along with other 9-1-1 services across the country require additional funding streams to ensure long-term sustainability. While this need will involve continued Council support, it also requires support from other levels of government. As a result, PSC is currently engaged with both the Alberta E9-1-1 Advisory Association (AEAA) and with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), as a means of addressing funding and other emerging issues at a provincial level. PSC is also working federally with the Canadian Radio Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) Action Plan Initiative to ensure telecommunications networks will support next generation 9-1-1 services, and address associated funding implications in the process. These efforts will support the responsiveness of 9-1-1 services to technological advances, increase accessible options for all citizens and support the effective long-term sustainability of PSC operations.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

In order to effectively maintain high levels of service in 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 2014 for instance, 97 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the overall experience of their interactions with PSC staff, representing the seventh consecutive year citizen satisfaction has exceeded 90 per cent. In addition, the survey found that 97 per cent of Calgarians believe 9-1-1 services are important to them and 93 per cent believe that 9-1-1 services are essential to their quality of life.

Strategic Alignment

This report aligns with Council's 2015-2018 Council priorities, including:

“Every Calgarian lives in a safe, mixed and just neighbourhood, and has the opportunity to participate in civic life”.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Citizens expect The City to respond to emergency and non-emergency calls in an efficient and timely manner and are well served when responses are effectively coordinated. The new wireless 9-1-1 grant constitutes 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:

Potential operating budget implications associated with PSC capital infrastructure are identified through The City business planning and budget process.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

PSC Operations relies heavily on effective and updated infrastructure and technology systems. As a result of these requirements and the subsequent need to fund continual capital improvements and emergency communications system maintenance and upgrades, the *9-1-1 Communication Centre Capital Financing Reserve* was established. This reserve is currently

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funded through both the 9-1-1 landline levy and now the wireless 9-1-1 grant program and serves to support the continued capital requirements of PSC. As of 2015 July, PSC has received \$3.4M of the \$4.4M in anticipated annual grant funding transferred to the 9-1-1 reserve. Attachment 3 provides an overview of the current and future PSC projects partially funded via the grant program, and outlines the remaining PSC unfunded capital project gap.

Risk Assessment

The use of wireless 9-1-1 grant funds to support key PSC projects is essential to ensuring a responsive and sustainable 9-1-1 system. Further, PSC's priority capital requirements are updated regularly through the Emergency Response Infrastructure Investment Plan (ERIIP) intake process, a comprehensive foundation for long-term strategic capital planning; minimizing risks on service delivery while enhancing the effectiveness of City infrastructure.

Reason for Recommendation

On 2014 April 1, following provincial advocacy efforts on the part of Council and other key stakeholders, Bill 15: Emergency 9-1-1 Act came into effect. The Act instituted a wireless 9-1-1 levy of 44 cents per month on all wireless devices to be distributed via a provincial grant to support 9-1-1 call centres throughout the province. This report provides an update on the provincial Alberta 911 Grant Program guidelines along with an overview of key current and future PSC capital projects funded via the grant. This includes 9-1-1 technology upgrades and operational back-up and disaster mitigation initiatives. In addition, it outlines continuing advocacy efforts with other levels of government and the telecommunications industry to ensure the sustainable long-term funding of PSC operations

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction
2. 9-1-1 Act Grant – PSC Project Allocations
3. Public Safety Communication Centre Projects