

## Request for Decision

### Integrated Dispatch Emergency Medical Services and Police Services

Presented To:	Community Services Committee
Presented:	Monday, Aug 11, 2014
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Type:	Managers' Reports

### Recommendation

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury endorses the proposed consolidation of EMS dispatch with the City's dispatch for 9-1-1, Police and Fire to achieve a fully integrated Emergency Communications Services system for Greater Sudbury, and

THAT the Chief of Fire and Paramedic Services working with the Chief Administrative Officer and Chief of Police engage the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) in discussions to transfer operational governance for EMS dispatch to Greater Sudbury (contingent on 100% provincial funding), and

THAT the funding of \$100,000 be provided from the 2014 and 2015 Operating Budget to support the development of a Business Plan for an 'Integrated Emergency Communications Services Framework' for submission to the Ontario Government.

#### Signed By

**Report Prepared By**

Tim P. Beadman  
Chief of Fire and Paramedic Services  
*Digitally Signed Jul 31, 14*

**Recommended by the Department**

Tim P. Beadman  
Chief of Fire and Paramedic Services  
*Digitally Signed Jul 31, 14*

**Recommended by the C.A.O.**

Doug Nadorozny  
Chief Administrative Officer  
*Digitally Signed Jul 31, 14*

### Finance Implications

If approved, the cost to develop the business plan of \$100,000 will be funded from the 2014 and 2015 operating budget.

## Executive Summary

On April 17, 2012, City Council adopted the following recommendations: THAT the City of Greater Sudbury undertake a feasibility study to achieve a fully integrated Emergency Communications Services System for Greater Sudbury and that the Chief of Emergency Services working with Police Services and the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer develop a Business Case for the consideration of Council and submission to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC).

The City of Greater Sudbury retained IBI Group to investigate the feasibility to integrate Emergency Medical Services dispatch [a service managed by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care] with the City's current dispatch system for 9-1-1, Police and Fire, to achieve a fully integrated Emergency Communications Services system for Greater Sudbury.

This feasibility study is now complete and supports a recommendation for a full integration of EMS dispatch with the City's dispatch for 9-1-1, Police and Fire as the preferred emergency communications services

system model for the City of Greater Sudbury.

## Background

Emergency communications plays a significant role within the continuum of Police, Fire and EMS public safety services. As the 'first' of the first responders, emergency communications personnel serve as the critical link between callers and the emergency help they require.

Providing continuous coverage by way of telephone, radio and computer aided dispatch (CAD) systems, emergency communications personnel evaluate incoming 9-1-1 calls to determine the location and urgency of each incident and they dispatch emergency responder resources as required (Police, Fire and EMS). They also provide front-line responders with communications support, monitoring front-line responder activity, responding as requested with additional information, dispatching additional resource support and when required, executing a coordinated multi-agency response.

Greater Sudbury is currently served by two separately operated (stand-alone) emergency communications centres. One centre, operated by the Greater Sudbury Police Service, answers 9-1-1 calls, and dispatches for Police and Fire. The other, the Sudbury Central Ambulance Communication Centre (CACC) operated by the Ontario MOHLTC processes and deploys City ambulances.

In times of crisis it is not only the caller (i.e., the public) that relies on emergency communications for help. Emergency service responders (Police, Fire and EMS) also rely on emergency communications for expedient call taking and dispatch services that will enable their front-line resources to respond quickly, safely and effectively. In short, the timeliness, speed and quality of the work performed by emergency communications personnel directly impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of the emergency services that the public receives from Police, Fire and EMS responders.

In this respect, Greater Sudbury's proposal to implement a fully integrated emergency communications services system stems from a desire to streamline and improve the quality of the communications services and by extension, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the emergency services that the public receives from the City's Police, Fire and EMS responders.

## Findings

Greater Sudbury has successfully implemented a 'partially consolidated' emergency communications centre that is staffed with communicators who are cross-trained to deliver 9-1-1 call taking on an integrated basis with Police and Fire dispatch. The centre, which is managed by Greater Sudbury Police Service (GSPS) has been operating in this manner for over 15 years.

It would appear that one of the original objectives for consolidating the two dispatch services (Police and Fire) was to contain costs. Drawing from research of emergency dispatch best practices, IBI Group conclude that the cost to deliver Police and Fire dispatch services in Greater Sudbury is comparable to that of multiple other jurisdictions, and therefore in their opinion, this objective has been attained. In addition, the consolidation of Police and Fire dispatch has improved interoperability of communications and inter-agency coordination of Police and Fire field operations.

IBI conducted comprehensive research on various emergency dispatch models which demonstrate that a 'fully integrated' emergency communications services system designed to deliver 9-1-1 on an integrated basis with Police, Fire and EMS dispatch would be preferable to the City's existing partially consolidated dispatch model. The potential benefits to all three emergency services include:

- Streamlining the dispatch functions and improve service response times
- Cost avoidance (service level enhancements) associated with improved service response times
- Improved interoperability of communications
- Improved inter-agency coordination of deployment and field operations
- Enhanced information sharing and responder safety
- Cost savings derived from sharing the same secure communications facility, CAD and radio

communications systems and communications staff resources.

The research affirms that Greater Sudbury's proposal to integrate EMS dispatch with the City's current dispatch system for 9-1-1, Police and Fire is consistent with approaches that other North American jurisdictions have taken to improve emergency dispatch services efficiency and cost effectiveness. Calgary, Denver, Portland and Fairfax are examples of jurisdictions that have implemented 'fully integrated' emergency communications services systems.

Greater Sudbury's proposal to assume operational responsibility for EMS dispatch is also consistent with ambulance dispatch arrangements in Toronto, Ottawa, Niagara and Timmins, where in each instance the municipality manages the EMS dispatch function on behalf of the Ontario MOHLTC, and for such services the Ministry pays 100 percent of the costs.

Numerous Ontario municipalities, including Greater Sudbury, share a common concern over ambulance dispatch. Specifically, the issue is that of a third party ambulance communications centre (a non-municipal entity) having authority to deploy the municipality's EMS resources and the consequential affects of such decisions on the municipality's capabilities to sustain rapid EMS response time performance, and to operate the EMS services effectively, within approved operating budget. For Toronto, Ottawa, Niagara and Timmins, such concerns have been largely alleviated. Since Greater Sudbury's proposal to assume operational responsibility for EMS dispatch is consistent with ambulance dispatch arrangements in the above named municipalities, the proposed transfer of EMS dispatch responsibility should also alleviate such concerns as they apply to Greater Sudbury.

The principal findings arising from the 1B1 Group's investigation may be summarized as follows:

- As the 'first' of the first responders, emergency communications personnel serve as the critical link between callers and the emergency help they require. Full integration will improve communications and response capabilities of in-the-field emergency responders, by means such as those listed below:
  - Functional streamlining
  - Interoperability/information sharing
  - Response speed
  - Use of responder resources
  - Responder safety
  - Execution of a coordinated multi-agency response to large scale incidents.
- Full integration will increase municipal control over the City's ambulance resources and municipal accountability for EMS performance, productivity and budget.
- The proposal to assume operational governance of EMS dispatch aligns to leading-edge fully-integrated systems in other jurisdictions.
- The proposal is consistent with ambulance dispatch arrangements in municipalities that manage the EMS dispatch function on behalf of the Ontario MOHLTC, and for such services the Ministry pays 100 percent of the costs.
- The submission of a proposal at this time is considered timely and appropriate. The Ontario MOHLTC recently concluded a 5-year Niagara Ambulance Communication Service (NACS) pilot project evaluation which affirms that EMS in Niagara has benefitted from integration most notably in resource management, technology innovation, and integrated policies and procedures.
- Greater Sudbury, with a population of close to 160,000 and a geography that includes urban and suburban development areas, as well as rural and remote communities, is of size and geography that would serve well as a preferred model to pilot for a fully integrated emergency communications system.
- Further, Sudbury CACC directs the movement of ambulances and ambulance supports for a geographic area that includes the City of Greater Sudbury, and Manitoulin and Sudbury Districts, including Manitoulin Island and the French River area south of Sudbury. By way of its proposal to assume operational responsibility for EMS dispatch, Greater Sudbury is signifying a willingness to

continue to manage ambulance communications services and other volunteer fire fighting services throughout this entire geographic area, with the understanding that the Ministry will pay 100 percent of the costs.

- Value added considerations include Greater Sudbury's reputation as a municipality committed to innovation and cost-effective services as demonstrated by Greater Sudbury's experience with a partially-consolidated police-fire dispatch, and Greater Sudbury's commitment to collaboration and transparency with MOHLTC.
- Police, Fire and EMS workers have a strong history of collaboration and partnerships in the delivery of front-line services throughout the City of Greater Sudbury.
- The cost to deliver the full range of emergency communications services in Greater Sudbury is approximately \$6.5 million a year. This includes \$3.5 million that the City pays for 9-1-1 and police- fire dispatch, and \$3 million that MOHLTC pays for ambulance dispatch. On a per capita basis this cost is higher than the per capita costs for fully integrated systems in Calgary, Denver, Portland and Fairfax. By changing to a fully integrated dispatch, the potential for operating savings is estimated to be \$1 million or more a year.
- While reducing cost is a consideration in integration, the primary objective is to enhance effective management of a public safety response to an emergency.

The Chief of Fire and Paramedic Services, the Police Chief and the City's Chief Administrative Officer - support the consolidation of EMS dispatch with the City's dispatch for 9-1-1, Police and Fire to achieve a fully integrated Emergency Communications Services system for Greater Sudbury. The information and findings reported in the feasibility study will assist the City in its development of a Business Plan for an 'Integrated Emergency Communications Services Framework'. In order to do so, it is recommended that the services of a third party subject matter expert be retained, who has demonstrated qualifications and successful experiences in achieving a fully integrated Emergency Communication Services System for submission to the Ontario Government.