

Request for Decision

Feasibility Study — Integrated Emergency Communications Services System

Presented To: Community Services
Committee

Presented: Monday, Mar 26, 2012

Report Date Thursday, Mar 15, 2012

Type: Managers' Reports

Recommendation

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 CAO develop a Business Case for the consideration of the City's Community Services Committee/Council and submission to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, and

THAT the funding of \$100,000 be provided for from a combination of the operating budget and a contribution from the Land Ambulance Reserve Fund to support this undertaking.

Signed By

Report Prepared By

Tim Beadman
Chief of Emergency Services
Digitally Signed Mar 15, 12

Recommended by the Department

Tim Beadman
Chief of Emergency Services
Digitally Signed Mar 15, 12

Recommended by the C.A.O.

Doug Nadorozny
Chief Administrative Officer
Digitally Signed Mar 21, 12

Finance Implications

If approved, the funding for the feasibility study will be provided for from the operating budget and a contribution from the Land Ambulance Reserve Fund.

Executive Summary

The Emergency Services Department, working with Police Services and the Office of the CAO, should jointly investigate the feasibility to integrate EMS dispatch with the City's current dispatch system for 9-1-1, Police and Fire, to achieve a fully integrated Emergency Communications Services system for the Greater City. This should include development of a 'phased' implementation plan (inclusive of capital and operating costs) and a Business Case for the Community Services Committee/Council's consideration and submission to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Phase 1 of the implementation plan may be the City's assumption of operational governance (100% provincially funded) for ambulance dispatch.

Background

In the Province of Ontario, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) has had responsibility for all aspects of ambulance communications, including the answering and processing of incoming requests for

ambulance service, the assignment of ambulances to emergency and non-emergency calls and, traditionally, the deployment of available resources within the requirements of the municipalities' deployment plan (Pomax Inc, 2009).

In the North, there are two Central Ambulance Communications Centres (Sudbury & Thunder Bay) operated by the MOHLTC, and another three centres located in Timmins (Police), Sault Ste. Marie (Hospital), and North Bay (Hospital) that are operated as non-ministry dispatch centres. The MOHLTC currently provides 100% of operating to non-ministry dispatch centres in the Province.

For the City's Emergency Medical Services, the City relies on the Sudbury Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) located at McFarlane Lake (3767 Highway 69 S) operated by the MOHLTC; whereas, Greater Sudbury Police Services provide 9-1-1 and emergency dispatch services for the Police and Fire Services.

The two agencies (CACC and Police Communications) operate independently from separate locations, using different staff, CAD/COM systems, operating protocols, standards, etc. The lack of interoperability of communications impedes information sharing and contributes to operational inefficiency and occasional delay in deployment of the correct resource. Further, there is an overlap of Fire and EMS responsibilities frequently resulting in deployment of resources from both Services when they may not be required e.g., medical aid calls. Also called into question is the quality of EMS dispatch call data records, which the City receives through governmental third party services, external to the MOHLTC Emergency Health Services Branch.

There are more streamlined models for public safety dispatch that other jurisdictions have implemented, ranging from physical co-location of dispatch services, to partial consolidation of functions, to complete integration. It has been suggested that the City should investigate assumption of operational governance for ambulance dispatch services – as is the case in the City of Toronto, City of Ottawa and in the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

The Regions of Peel, Durham, York, and Halton, and the County of Simcoe have undertaken a joint feasibility study and the findings have recommended taking the necessary steps to convince the Province that governance and operational responsibility for land ambulance dispatch services in the Greater Toronto Area should be transferred to the municipalities as a single GTA Dispatch centre model. And further, that the Province should assume a legislative, regulatory, and continued funding role only.

In Sudbury, given that the City's Emergency Medical Services call volumes represents about 90% of the work assignment for the Sudbury Central Ambulance Communications Centre, there is a further opportunity to investigate the feasibility to integrate EMS dispatch with the City's current dispatch system for 9-1-1. Based on the findings to date, the City of Timmins is the only dispatch centre that has responsibility for all three emergency services (Police, Fire, and EMS) throughout the Province.

The Chief of Emergency Services working with Police Services and the Office of the CAO will, with the assistance of third party subject matter expertise, develop a Business Case for the City's Community Services Committee/Council's consideration and submission of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.