

Staff Report to Council

Administrative Services

FILE: 01-0400-20/22

REPORT DATE: June 15, 2022 **MEETING DATE:** June 21, 2022
TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Kate Barchard, Corporate Officer
SUBJECT: 9-1-1 Resolution for UBCM Convention

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW/APPROVAL:



RECOMMENDATION(S):

WHEREAS 9-1-1 is an essential public safety service and emergency preparedness tool, and the CRTC has mandated the rollout of “Next Generation” 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) to move calls to digital or IP-based infrastructure by March 1, 2025, and has communicated the need for a significant additional funding commitment from its local government service partners in 2022 and beyond, yet there is no provincially-governed agency responsible for the planning, operation and coordination of 9-1-1 services in B.C.;

AND WHEREAS Local governments in B.C. are constrained in their financial revenue sources and financial capacity to fund these necessary and essential federally-mandated 9-1-1 service enhancements, and have called repeatedly for new funding sources to support local 9-1-1 services, as exist in other provinces, including adopting resolutions through the UBCM calling for a provincial wireless call-answer levy to fund local 9-1-1 service in 2004, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2019 and 2021:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM call on the provincial government to develop a new provincial mandate and structure for 9-1-1 service delivery, with an improved governance, funding and operational model, to help modernize and improve 9-1-1 services across B.C., including the planning, operation and coordination of CRTC-mandated Next Generation 9-1-1 services;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UBCM advocate for BC Ambulance Service to pay a pro-rata share of 9-1-1 costs and costs associated with delays in the transfer of calls to BCAS dispatch.

PURPOSE

To present to Council a proposed resolution and background materials provided by E-Comm, requesting a UBCM resolution from local governments regarding a new provincial mandate and funding and operational model for 9-1-1 service delivery in BC.

☐ Information Report

☒ Decision Report

☐ Direction Report

DISCUSSION

Background:

The City of Pitt Meadows received a request from E-Comm urging Council to consider passing a resolution supporting proposed changes in the statutory responsibilities for 9-1-1 services in B.C. The letter included an ask of local governments to support the proposed changes by adopting a resolution to be forwarded to UBCM for consideration at their upcoming annual convention. Further background information on E-Comm in BC, their current realities and pressures, and the limited funding sources available to local governments for such services is included as **Attachment A**.

Analysis:

It is recommended Council support the above motion and submit for consideration to UBCM.

Local Governments are currently the sole funding source for 9-1-1 services in British Columbia. This means it will require a significant increase in taxation to local residents to maintain current service levels, potentially enhance service levels, as well as facilitate the roll out of the mandated NG 9-1-1 infrastructure.

9-1-1 is an essential public safety service utilized by police, fire and paramedics; as well as for provincial emergency preparedness and response. Population growth, cell phone use, calls for service increase, emergency incidents such as the heat dome, flooding, opiate crisis and more have all placed increased pressure on the 9-1-1 system. Significant increased funding is required, or the deterioration of service levels will result; this includes but is not limited to longer wait times and the public receiving a busy tone when calling 9-1-1 in an emergency situation.

The modern needs of 9-1-1 services have outgrown the service's original structure, governance, operations and infrastructure; all require review and potential upgrades to fulfill the essential service safety needs of the province. To ensure fair and equitable emergency 9-1-1 services for all communities, including First Nations in the province, it is necessary that the provincial government provide adequate funding for the service. Citizens of British Columbia see 9-1-1 as a provincially accessible service; however, in its current structure the province does not contribute to the funding of 9-1-1.

BC Emergency Health Services (BECHS), provincially governed, operated and funded, is responsible for pre-hospital emergency services. This includes BC Ambulance Service (BCAS). When a call is made to 9-1-1 the call taker's initial question is - Police, Fire or Ambulance?

British Columbians that require the service of a BC Ambulance call 9-1-1 and in the current structure BCEHS does not pay towards the 9-1-1 service. Proportional funding for this service should be required.

In addition, a significant issue arose due to the lack of call takers and service levels at the BCAS call-taking system. Due to this choke point, and the protocol for 9-1-1 call takers to stay on the line with callers until call transfer, a significant service interruption occurred with callers unable to reach 9-1-1 in an emergency.

This BCEHS issue created a major potential risk to public safety, a deterioration in service and morale and health and stress concerns within ECOMM 9-1-1. While a trial procedure has been implemented by 9-1-1 to mitigate the call back up issue, it can be argued the result is a decrease in service levels. The impact of provincial BCEHS operations model and the lack of provincial funding, nor a contractual mechanism to rectify issues such as above, is unacceptable.

Funding for this essential safety service can no longer rest solely with Local Governments. Municipalities such as Pitt Meadows with a population under 20,000 residents and a small tax base cannot bare the burden of solely funding the 9-1-1 emergency services system. Provincial financial support is necessary.

Relevant Policy, Bylaw or Legislation:

- ***Emergency Communications Corporations Act*** – the provincial legislation governing E-Comm operations.

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

- ☒ Principled Governance ☐ Balanced Economic Prosperity ☐ Corporate Excellence
☒ Community Spirit & Wellbeing ☐ Transportation & Infrastructure Initiatives
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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- ☐ None ☐ Budget Previously Approved ☐ Referral to Business Planning
☒ Other

Provincial funding of E-Comm 9-1-1 services would significantly reduce pressures on the City to fund this service. Alternatively, if the Province does not step up, then a substantial tax increase may be required in the near future to maintain service levels.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- ☒ Inform ☐ Consult ☐ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower
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KATZIE FIRST NATION CONSIDERATIONS

Referral ☐ Yes ☒ No

SIGN-OFFS

Written by:

Kate Barchard,
Corporate Officer

Reviewed by:

Diane Chamberlain,
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S):

- A. 9-1-1 UBCM Resolution – Additional Background Information