



**REPORT TO THE ELECTORAL AREA SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, 01 JUNE 2011**

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**SUBJECT**    **A BYLAW TO REDUCE FALSE ALARMS IN THE SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS ELECTORAL AREA**

**ISSUE**

RCMP officers on the Southern Gulf Islands were summoned to 64 false alarms last year. The RCMP requested that a bylaw be written that would help reduce these calls for service.

**BACKGROUND**

The RCMP on the Southern Gulf Islands has limited resources. There have been an inordinate number of false alarms to businesses and residences. These alarms tie up police resources and take them away from other more serious policing duties. There is also a cost factor in attending false alarms when officers have to be called out on overtime, or have to travel between islands to respond to these alarms. There are also risks involved when police officers attend these alarms post haste.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Adopt a bylaw that assesses a fee for chronic false alarms and affixes unpaid fees to property taxes and allows for prosecution under the *Offence Act* to owners of alarms that are chronically false.
2. Adopt a bylaw that has a schedule of fines that can be imposed on the owners of chronically false alarms, by means of municipal ticket information (MTI).
3. Direct staff to prepare public education material and update the CRD website to inform the public about the costs, time and risks attributed to false alarms.
4. Receive the report and take no action at this time.

**IMPLICATIONS**

**Social Implications**

The adoption of a bylaw that reduces false alarms would free up police officers to investigate criminal activity and be more active in community policing.

**Environmental Implications**

The adoption of a bylaw that reduces the number of false alarms would reduce the amount of nuisance noise these alarms cause.

### Financial Implications

The adoption of a false alarm reduction bylaw would save money from the RCMP budget currently spent on police overtime and vehicle expenses. However, there would be some administrative and bylaw enforcement costs to the CRD associated with investigations and the staff reports and record keeping necessary to support the imposition of fees and prosecutions under the *Offence Act*. These costs would not be very high as only the very chronic offenders would be prosecuted, and only then after receiving sufficient warning

A Bylaw with complementary amendments to the MTI Bylaw was proposed under Alternative No. 2, a schedule of offences would need to be developed with incremental fines. The suggested fine amounts would be \$100 for a first offence, \$200 for a second offence and for a third or subsequent offence the offender would be charged under the *Offence Act*, where a fine can be up to \$10,000. If MTIs were issued there would be costs associated with prosecutions and with collection of these fines. A Bylaw regulation and system of enforcement through ticketing may be difficult to administer in the Southern Gulf Islands due to the need to gather evidence and directly serve the property owners with the ticket information on the various islands. Further, when tickets are disputed, staff will need to prepare evidence and information and make an appearance before a Justice of the Peace.

### CONCLUSION

Staff is of the opinion that the best solution would be Alternative No. 1; a bylaw that allows for a fee collection and be affixed to property taxes if not paid. The bylaw would also include a provision for prosecution under the *Offence Act* should the owners of properties generating chronic false alarms not respond to the fees established by the Bylaw.

### RECOMMENDATION

That the Electoral Area Services committee recommend to the Board:

1. That Bylaw No. 3784, "A Bylaw to Reduce False Alarms in the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area" be read a first, second and third time.
2. That notice of intent to consider adoption of Bylaw No. 3784 be advertised in the Island Tides newspaper.



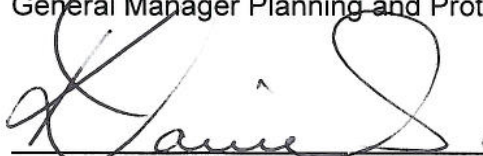
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Don Brown, Manager  
CRD Bylaw and Animal Care Services



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Robert Lapham, MCIP  
General Manager Planning and Protective Services



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Kelly Daniels  
Chief Administrative Officer  
Concurrence