



**REPORT TO PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF NOVEMBER 27, 2013**

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**SUBJECT     911 CALL ANSWER CONTRACT WITH THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED  
POLICE**

**ISSUE**

The contract with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) for the provision of 911 Call Answer requires renewal.

**BACKGROUND**

The Capital Regional District (CRD) maintains direct operational responsibility for 911 Call Answer, including the collection and administration of the Call Answer Levy (CAL). Currently, 911 Call Answer is handled out of three Primary Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), located in Victoria Police Dispatch, Saanich Police Dispatch and the West Shore RCMP Operational Communications Centre (RCMP OCC).

The Victoria Police Dispatch and the Saanich Police Dispatch operate under the direct responsibility of their police boards and are financed through local tax requisition and a contribution from the CAL to offset their 911 Call Answer duties. The RCMP OCC operates under the direction of the RCMP Provincial E Division headquarters. The CRD contributes 3.5 FTEs to the RCMP OCC to offset the costs of 911 Call Answer duties. These positions are paid for through the CAL and operate under an agreement between the CRD and the RCMP.

Currently in BC all current and expired contracts for 911 Call Answer Service delivery are negated as a result of the provincial negotiations with the RCMP for policing services. Further, the RCMP has determined that 911 Call Answer is not a Core Service by their definition, and will only be continued under contract in areas where full cost coverage can be demonstrated.

The most significant change to the CRD agreement requested by the RCMP is an increase in direct funding to cover the cost of managing and accommodating the CRD 911 Call Answer staff which would increase the overall cost of the service contract by approximately 10% per year going forward.

**Current Initiatives**

**CRD Police Working Group**

CRD staff participates in the region's 911 Police Working Group with a mandate to "examine the structure and processes related to police communications and dispatch in the CRD, and to present to the area Chiefs for their consideration, any recommendations which would enhance the operational or fiscal performance in this area". The group has also included representation from the RCMP, Victoria Police, Oak Bay Police and Central Saanich Police. On March 1, 2013 correspondence from the working group was sent to each of the three PSAPs requesting participation in a study to measure baseline data on 911 Call Answer and Police Dispatch. Two of the PSAPs (Victoria Police and the RCMP) took part.

This project has resulted in an initial review of specified benchmarks and key indicators including overall costs and service levels based on the current service delivery models. From that the working group identified a number of service delivery options for consideration which were evaluated using the benchmark data. On November 4, 2013 the working group recommended working towards the implementation of a single 911 Call Answer/Police Dispatch centre for all participating police

agencies and their jurisdictions. This recommendation is being brought back to each of the police organizations for consideration and if supported, the working group recommends an implementation strategy with consideration of identified key concerns be developed to move this initiative forward.

#### UBCM Steering Committee on a Province Wide Call Answer Levy

A UBCM Steering Committee has looked at the options and impacts of a province wide CAL that included all devices that connect to 911, beyond the current levy collected on land lines. This was primarily focused on wireless devices, but recognizes the growing changes in technology including Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP). The Steering Committee developed a background paper on the 911 Call Answer system in BC. This report included information gathered from all 12 PSAPs in BC and numerous regional districts, municipalities and police departments. The report has been circulated to UBCM members and was the topic of a session at the annual UBCM Convention in Vancouver.

The background paper clearly identifies significant issues facing 911 in working towards the implementation of Next Generation 911 (NG911) and the benefits of standardizing the approach used in 911 in our province.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

That the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee recommend:

1. That staff proceed with development of an implementation strategy for a unified 911 Call Answer and Police Dispatch Centre as supported by the CRD Police Working Group and arrange for an interim agreement with the RCMP while this process is under way.
2. That staff proceed with finalizing a five year contract for continued 911 Call Answer Service by the RCMP OCC, with additional funding for staff oversight and administration as requested by the RCMP.
3. That staff serves notice to the RCMP that the CRD will not be entering into a contract with the current RCMP and develop an RFP for 911 Call Answering services for those areas served by the RCMP.

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Financial Implications**

##### RCMP Contract Requests

The RCMP have determined that they will only continue to provide the 911 Call Answer service if all costs that they determine are part of that service are provided for in an agreement with the CRD. A recent study of RCMP OCC facilities in BC completed by Pomax Consulting has provided a formula for staffing resource requirements that supports the current level of staffing that the CRD provides. The Pomax study suggests 3.1 FTE. The CRD provides 3.5 FTE which allows for backfill for vacation and sick leave. The RCMP has indicated they will review the Pomax study prior to accepting the formula or the staffing levels suggested. This may result in the RCMP determining and requesting additional CRD staff.

In addition to the staffing provided by the CRD, the RCMP are requesting funding to cover the overhead and management of our staff in the OCC and also funding to cover the backfilling of staff for vacation or sick leave. Total cost increase requested by the RCMP is \$42,782 for the 2013/2014 RCMP Fiscal Year with an approximate escalation of 2% per year for the following four years.

### Implementation Strategy

The Police Working Group is recommending an implementation study take place to articulate more specifically the impacts of moving to a single location with a focus on six key areas: staffing, resiliency/redundancy, facility requirements, impact of changing technology and NG911, governance and funding. This would provide a functional road map on how to incorporate the 911 and dispatch services for the participants. The 911 budget has money allocated currently to support work towards unification and this study would not impact the current proposed budget.

### Impacts of Changing Technology

The technology involved in 911 Call Answer is changing in response to a number of factors including the way residents contact 911 (cell, VOIP) and the infrastructure required to maintain the increased data and traffic. Significant capital costs are expected as 911 moves to NG911. The CRD does maintain a Capital Equipment Replacement Fund for 911 in anticipation of these needs, but will need to review the expected requirements for investment as the 911 standards for NG911 are determined.

### Unified 911 Call Answer

As noted in the background of this report, the Police Working Group is analyzing the impact of changing how 911 Call Answer and Police Dispatch operates in our region to find a more cost-effective service delivery model to offset the anticipated rising costs of technological changes and also ensures that the high level of service is maintained.

In reviewing the current service models the two key cost drivers are staffing and the required investment in technology or capital upgrades to maintain current with 911 and police dispatch standards. Both of these key drivers have been considered in looking at other service models. While initial research suggests that the requirement for call takers in our area will not decrease, further study will be required to finalize staffing needs in a single centre. In relation to the technology or capital costs, investment in a single location creates an obvious cost savings over multiple locations.

### Operational Implications

The current service delivery model in regards to operational proficiency is meeting or exceeding industry standards. However, this does not mean that there are no advantages to be gained by incorporating new procedures or considering other service delivery models.

Some operational advantages being considered by the working group include better sharing of information, support for large incident call answer and dispatch (call volume spikes) and shared investment in common technology.

These considerations are supported by the Police Working Group's recommendation to work towards a single, unified operation for participating jurisdictions.

### CONCLUSION

Within BC, 911 Call Answer is undergoing a change as the systems move to encompass NG911. The UBCM study provides significant background information and makes a strong case for province wide, agreed upon standards of service, supported by an increased CAL encompassing all devices connecting to 911. The CRD is also facing necessary change driven both by technology and by increasing costs. The RCMP have moved to determine that 911 Call Answer is not a core service of theirs and are requesting significant increases in funding from the CRD in order to continue service delivery.

There is strong support among the police departments taking part in the Police Working Group to consider a change to the service delivery model that would provide for a more cost-effective, efficient service able to better react to technology or operational needs. As a group, they have recommended moving towards the implementation of a single operation for 911 Call Answer and Police Dispatch for participating jurisdictions.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee recommend:

1. That staff proceed with development of an implementation strategy for a unified 911 Call Answer and Police Dispatch Centre as supported by the Capital Regional District Police Working Group and arrange for an interim agreement with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police while this process is under way.

**\*\*Original Signed\*\***

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Concurrence