

9

CENTRALIZED FIRE DISPATCH SERVICES UPDATE

The Finance and Administration Committee recommends:

- 1. Receipt of the following report dated May 27, 2010, from the Chief Administrative Officer; and**
- 2. Referral of this matter back to the Chief Administrative Officer for a report in the first quarter of 2011 outlining steps the Region might take to move forward on centralized fire dispatch.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

Finance and Administration Committee has directed staff to report back on the history of a proposed centralized fire dispatch, and the status of legislated amendments or other approvals that were previously identified as necessary precursors to a Centralized Fire dispatch model.

3. BACKGROUND

Centralized dispatch services for 911 emergencies in York Region has been an evolving subject

Centralized dispatch services for 911 emergencies in York Region has been a topic of Council discussion for many years. Originally this discussion focused on a joint 911 operations centre for York Regional Police and fire services, and then expanded to include York Region Emergency Medical Services (EMS) since their divestment to the Region on January 1, 2000.

On May 19, 2005, York Region Council directed staff to cease further action on a proposed centralized fire communication service due to labour constraints contained in the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA)*. In July of 2004 York Region had requested the Province make legislative changes necessary to allow the Region to proceed with this joint communication service. This request was declined by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services in February, 2005.

Fire dispatch continues to be the responsibility of local municipalities. These services are currently divided into three dispatch centres located in:

- Markham (covering Markham)
- Richmond Hill (covering Richmond Hill, Newmarket, Aurora, Georgina, East Gwillimbury and as of January 2010,Whitchurch-Stouffville); and
- Vaughan (covering Vaughan and King)

These centres handle fire services dispatch for the eight municipal fire departments.

On October 2, 2008, a report was presented to Regional Council providing an update on the provision of centralized emergency dispatch services. Highlights from that report and subsequent updates are included in this update.

The Province continues to provide dispatch services for York Region EMS

York Region EMS land ambulance dispatch operations continue to be under control of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). The Province's EMS dispatch services for York Region are run out of a centralized site in Barrie known as the Georgian Centralized Ambulance Communication Centre. The cost of this dispatch service is borne entirely by the Province.

In October 2008, it was reported that Niagara Region was the successful proponent of a request for proposal with the MOHLTC to operate ambulance dispatch on behalf of the Province. Niagara Region was granted limited authority to redesign the dispatch operation to leverage the latest in technology and best practices. Niagara Region has been successful in achieving improvements in call processing proficiency and response times. It was also reported that the City of Ottawa successfully transferred provincially operated dispatch services to their local EMS service and continues to do so today albeit, through a slightly different model than Niagara.

York Regional Police continue to operate dispatch functions and provide radio infrastructure to municipalities

York Regional Police expect to continue to operate dispatch functions from the existing facility located at Police Headquarters at the Administrative Building for the foreseeable future, and in recent years have made considerable strategic investments for that purpose. Any additional space required as a result of York Region's expanding population can be accommodated through the relocation of personnel from Headquarters to the new Aurora facility and minor space renovations of the existing centre.

It is expected that the eight municipal fire services will continue to use the radio infrastructure operated by York Regional Police. Both Richmond Hill and Vaughan have entered into agreements with York Regional Police which permits them to dispatch from their own locations using the Computer Aided Dispatch infrastructure owned and operated by the police.

York Region EMS working in collaboration with Regions of Peel, Halton Durham and Simcoe County on review of EMS dispatch Services in the GTA

York Region has made a number of requests to the Province for the transfer of ambulance dispatch services to York Region EMS. In 2008, a joint request for proposal was issued by Peel Region in collaboration with the Regions of York, Halton, Durham and Simcoe County to procure a comprehensive review of the current EMS dispatch system and recommend a delivery model to optimize the dispatch system in the GTA. The report was to focus on the review of current performance of the Provincial EMS dispatch system and make recommendations for improved system efficiencies. The results and recommendations of the consultants report have been reviewed by the involved Regional Chairs, Warden, CAOs and EMS Officials. Peel Region, acting as the project lead has shared the report findings to the Minister of Health and Long Term Care. A status report is on the Community and Health Services Committee Agenda for June 9, 2010.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Local municipal fire services continue to amalgamate some fire dispatch services

Over the past few years the consolidation of fire dispatch has continued despite the fact the Province has not made significant changes to the *Fire Protection & Prevention Act*. For instance, on October 20, 2009 at the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council meeting, a report was put forward with a recommendation to transfer dispatch of Whitchurch-Stouffville fire calls from the Markham dispatch centre to the Richmond Hill Fire department dispatch centre. This has been in effect since January 2010. Richmond Hill now provides dispatch services for six of the nine municipalities, Vaughan provides dispatch services for two municipalities and Markham provides dispatch services for its own resources.

Other very positive changes that have occurred is the updating of technology. Richmond Hill and Vaughan Fire Departments have installed new Computer Aided Dispatch systems which are now linked to the York Regional Police system and the Regional GIS database. The transition to the Computer Aided Dispatch and the link to the York Regional Police system allows fire departments on the system to integrate Mobile Data Terminals and GPS mapping into their trucks.

To date there have been no significant changes to the *Fire Protection & Prevention Act* that would alter the position of the Province from 2005.

York Regional Police continue to provide radio infrastructure to the local municipalities from Police Headquarters in Newmarket

On January 27, 2010 a proposal was put forward to the Police Services Board to approve the provision of Mobile Data Terminals to Richmond Hill Fire Department and Vaughan Fire and Rescue Services at a full cost recovery by York Regional Police. Agreements between York Regional Police and local municipal fire services to share radio infrastructure continue.

This further demonstrates the collaborative efforts that emergency responders are committed to in continuously improving the dispatch process.

York Regional Police currently operate and maintain the 800 megahertz Motorola Trunking Simulcast Radio communications System. The system was designed and installed by Motorola with an anticipated end life of 2014. York Regional Police have started preparing for the planned radio improvements in 2014. It is anticipated that discussions with stakeholders will begin in the fall of 2010.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Emergency dispatch services in York Region are funded by different funding bodies. York Region EMS dispatch services are operated and funded 100% by the MOHLTC, local municipal fire dispatch services are funded 100% by the local municipalities and York Regional Police dispatch services are funded 100% by York Region.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

There are no local municipal impacts as a result of this report.

7. CONCLUSION

Emergency services have worked collaboratively in the area of dispatch to improve response times

York Region is part of a group of municipalities that collaborated to undertake a review of the current EMS dispatch system and recommend a delivery model to optimize dispatch services. The results of that review are scheduled to go forward to Community and Health Services Committee on June 9, 2010.

Fire services continue to enhance dispatch services. Richmond Hill and Vaughan Fire Departments have implemented CAD. The Town Whitchurch-Stouffville transferred

dispatch responsibilities for its fire services from Markham to Richmond Hill on January 2010 and there was a recent proposal to implement Mobile Data Terminals by Richmond Hill and Vaughan fire services for their trucks.

York Regional Police expect to continue to operate dispatch functions from the existing facility located at Police Headquarters at the Administrative Building. Agreements between York Regional Police and local municipal fire services to share radio infrastructure continue.

The labor constraints contained in the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA)* and the legislative changes necessary that did not enable York Region to pursue a centralized fire dispatch centre in 2005 remain unchanged.

For more information on this report, please contact Morris Faccin, Manager of Emergency Management at Ext. 1212.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.