



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Community Safety Committee
From: Sandra Pearson
Manager Operational Support, Fire Rescue
Re: Accessing BC Hydro Records

Date: March 14, 2006
File:

Staff Recommendation

That the report "Accessing BC Hydro Records" be received for information.

Jim Hancock

Fire Chief

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY					
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE		CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER (Acting)		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES	NO	REVIEWED BY CAO	YES	NO
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

General Purposes Committee at their July 4, 2005 meeting referred the following to staff:

"1. That staff investigate with BC Hydro, the possibility of identifying those properties in Richmond which have spikes in the use of electricity, as has been recently implemented in the City of Surrey;"

Findings Of Fact

The cities of Surrey and Abbotsford are both currently accessing their community's BC Hydro abnormal consumption records. The abnormalities are an indicator that the electrical system integrity may have been compromised, resulting in serious safety consequences.

City staff have investigated Surrey's electrical safety inspection program because it was developed as the pilot program and has been operating the longest.

Surrey has found the current restrictions the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act places on BC Hydro on the release of its customers' electricity consumption information is a significant stumbling block to their electrical safety inspection program's success.

In exploring Surrey's approach they thought the Privacy Act's Section 25(1)(b) regarding disclosures in the public interest initially seemed the appropriate route, however that proved unwieldy because it would require making a case to BC Hydro and the Privacy Commissioner in each instance. The RCMP's participation in the Electrical Fire Safety Initiative team turned out to be key, as the Act's Section 33.2(i) allowed BC Hydro to release information to the police for criminal investigations.

As a result of the access to information challenges, Surrey's Fire Chief Len Garis is leading the effort to introduce legislative changes in the Spring 2006 sitting of BC's Parliament. The proposed legislative changes would see BC Hydro disclose irregular power consumption records directly to Municipalities, upon request. It is unknown at this time if the information would be given in a filtered state.

Analysis

City would be able to access Richmond's abnormal electrical consumption records from BC Hydro in the same manner as Surrey and Abbotsford.

Under the current privacy legislation, Richmond would also experience its attempts to access the information unwieldy.

Under the proposed new spring legislation the barriers would be removed making access easier.

Cities choosing to access their community's consumption records have a responsibility to act upon the information they receive. Surrey and Abbotsford have both developed electrical safety inspection programs for this purpose. Richmond currently does not have a program under which the information could be processed.

Financial Impact

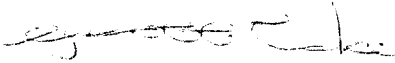
None.

Conclusion

The City of Richmond currently has the ability to access BC Hydro records. However, these records will be more readily accessible should new Provincial legislation be adopted this spring.

Richmond would need to develop, in conjunction with the BC Safety Authority, an electrical safety inspection program to process and address Richmond's information.

Staff will prepare a report for Committee's consideration dealing with a Richmond Electrical Inspection Program for the April Community Safety Committee meeting.



Sandra Pearson
Manager Operational Support, Richmond Fire Rescue
(2750)