



To: Community Safety Committee

Date: December 16, 2010

From: Tim Wilkinson
Acting Fire Chief, Richmond Fire-Rescue

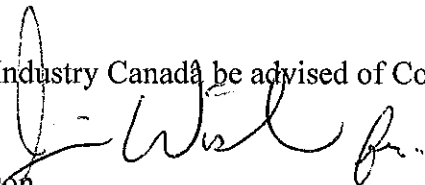
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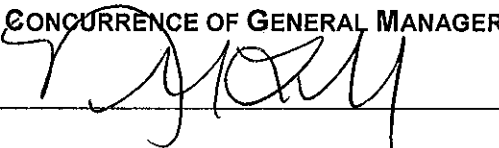
Re: **Establishing a National Public Safety Broadband Network**

Staff Recommendation

That:

1. the allocation of the 700mhz bandwidth for Public Safety Radio and Data Communications in Canada (as outlined in the report dated December 14, 2010 from the Deputy Fire Chief, Administration and Technology) be supported; and
2. that Industry Canada be advised of Council's position.


 Tim Wilkinson
 Acting Fire Chief, Richmond Fire-Rescue
 (604-303-2701)

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ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE		CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Emergency Programs	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	REVIEWED BY CAO YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

Industry Canada has requested public input on establishing a public safety broadband network.

This report supports Council's term goal:

"Ensure Richmond remains a safe and desirable community to live, work and play in through an interdisciplinary approach to community safety and a term strategy that results in:

- *Discussion with Council regarding policy direction for issues related to fire services provincially."*

Background

In 2008, Canada's Senate Committee on National Security and Defence identified the need for a National Strategy for Communications Interoperability for emergency response.

Governmental and Emergency Service leaders from across Canada created the National Strategy for Communications Interoperability document with input from all levels of government and emergency response services. The desired end-state of the strategy is that emergency responders can communicate as needed and as authorized across all disciplines and between all levels, on demand. The strategy recognizes that:

"In the event of a large-scale, complex emergency in Canada, no single agency at any level of government would have the required capacity and expertise to act unilaterally. Responding to such incidents would require cross-jurisdictional and potentially cross-border coordination amongst emergency responders, which would require a level of communications interoperability, that currently does not exist."

The Senate Committee recommended that Public Safety Canada involve provincial and municipal partners in the development and implementation of a National Public Safety Radio Communications Strategy within two years (2010). One of the strategic technology objectives outlined in the National Strategy for Communications Interoperability strategy, dated November 29, 2010, is to:

"Promote and support the development of a national public safety communications system based on common user requirements and open standards and a system of systems approach."

Analysis

Canada's existing 700 MHz broadband network will be vacated in August of 2011 when all television will transition from the analog spectrum to digital in order to house their digital programming elsewhere. Many private and public agencies are vying for the vacated broadband network when it becomes available to the open market through Industry Canada.

This transition presents an opportunity for Richmond Council to locally support the National Strategy for Communications Interoperability through the:

1. Creation of a national public safety network exclusive to emergency response agencies in Canada.
2. Development of a national interdisciplinary approach to community safety; and
3. Introduction of a network that would address existing local communication interoperability issues.

Locally, Richmond has made progress in addressing its local emergency responder interoperability communication issues through E-Comm, however Richmond's voice and data communications currently reside on the 800 MHz broadband network that also houses public cell phone communications and limits the amount of data transmittable.

There are many benefits to Richmond in supporting the move from 800 MHz to 700 MHz broadband including:

- The introduction of a single, common communications network where emergency responders across the nation can communicate securely in both voice and data, removing interoperability issues.
- Providing an opportunity for local responders to communicate with other emergency responder agencies such as the Canadian Military and Emergency Management B.C.
- Introducing a communication model that is consistent with the United States, who has allocated the use of their 700 MHz band for Public Safety agencies like Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) and local Fire Departments.

Industry Canada is initiating a consultation on a policy and technical framework to conduct an auction for portions of the spectrum in the 700 MHz band. Comments are being sought on general policy considerations related to commercial mobile broadband spectrum use, competition issues and on the use of the 700 MHz band for commercial mobile services. Industry Canada's deadline for information solicitation is February 28, 2011, after which they will determine the action plan on the allocation of the 700 MHz bandwidth

The development of the tools necessary to utilize the band is expected to take some 5-15 years to complete and would require a sophisticated transitional and financial plan.

The United States has allocated their 700 MHz band for public safety, with a portion of that band dedicated to commercial use.

Should a national communication system such as the one proposed be introduced, it is expected that all levels of government would contribute in some manner to any infrastructure, hardware or software changes necessary to implement the system.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and the Emergency Medical Services Chiefs of Canada are recommending this allocation.

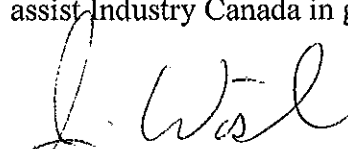
At the 2010 Interoperability Workshop that was attended by representatives from Richmond's RCMP, RFR and BCAS, there was support for this initiative.

Financial Impact

None at this time but there would be future costs for infrastructure, hardware and software.

Conclusion

Council's endorsement of the creation of a national public safety communications band would assist Industry Canada in gauging the level of support for this initiative.



J. Wishlove
Deputy Chief - Administration and Technology
(2700)

JW:jw