

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

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DATE 23 May 2000

TO/DEST. 9-1-1 Management Board Members

FROM/EXP. Management & Audit Services

SUBJECT/OBJET **9-1-1 ADMINISTRATION - PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT**

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the 9-1-1 Management Board receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

In September of 1999, the 9-1-1 Management Board requested Management & Audit Services' assistance in conducting a review of the current approach to administering 9-1-1 services. At the time, a two-phased approach was proposed to ensure a clear understanding of the key issues to be addressed. The focus of the first phase was to identify the issues for review (e.g. organizational roles and responsibilities, funding options, possible service delivery options), and confirm the project purpose, scope and approach. Subsequent to gaining consensus, a detailed review was to be conducted to complete the research and analysis, and to develop specific recommendations for improvement.

Since the beginning of phase one of MAS' work, the Ottawa Transition Board has been formed and has now established a number of project teams to address transition issues in all operating areas. One such team has been created to investigate issues related to all Emergency Services, including Police, Fire, Ambulance, Emergency Measures and 9-1-1.

DISCUSSION

Throughout discussions with members of the 9-1-1 Management Board, a number of key observations and potential issues were identified. The following briefly summarizes the main messages arising from these discussions:

1. ***The Role of the 9-1-1 Management Board and Advisory Committee.*** The 9-1-1 management Board and its Advisory Committee was created in 1988. At that time, there were several separate police, fire and ambulance organizations providing emergency response services across the region. The Board and Committee structure was created in order to ensure proper co-ordination of all involved.

It is widely acknowledged that this approach has served the region very well in the past. However, there is recognition that the current Board and Committee structure may not be necessary within an amalgamated municipality. It was generally agreed that some form of internal co-ordinating committee would continue to be of value to deal with a full range of emergency & protective issues. Combining the current Board and Advisory Committee into a single body was suggested as a way of achieving this in a more streamlined manner.

2. ***The Reporting Structure of the 9-1-1 Function.*** Although the 9-1-1 call in-take function remains a separate unit, it is currently housed within the Regional Police Services Communication Centre which is responsible for the police dispatch function. Board members all clearly indicated their satisfaction with the 9-1-1 services provided to-date by Regional Police. The importance of viewing 9-1-1 as a key service to all emergency and protective agencies serving the community was reinforced throughout discussions. As such, there is a clear need to retain the 9-1-1 unit as a distinct function, whether as a component of a larger dispatch function or not.
3. ***Budget Management.*** One potential concern raised regarding the current reporting structure has been ease of managing budget issues. With both the Region's Emergency Measures Unit and the Police Services now sharing budget-related responsibilities, there has been confusion and uncertainty regarding the source and use of funds as well as the access to adequate budget information. As part of creating any new dispatch and 9-1-1 structure for the City, it will be important to create a distinct cost centre for 9-1-1 with clear budget responsibilities.
4. ***Use of External Service Provider for 9-1-1.*** The possibility of using an external service provider for 9-1-1 has been under consideration for some time. Opinions on the viability of such an approach are varied. Although it is recognized that there may be some opportunity for cost savings, serious reservations were raised by most Board members. The possibility that an external provider would lack adequate knowledge of the local community, as well as the loss of managerial control over the function, were cited as chief concerns. Preliminary indications are that, while many smaller areas have pursued this approach, most major municipalities continue to manage 9-1-1 in-house.

CONCLUSION

Of primary concern for members of the Board is ensuring proper co-ordination and resolution of 9-1-1-specific issues within the broader context of the amalgamation of all Emergency Services in the new City of Ottawa. Resolution of the issues identified herein should be incorporated into the transition process. Once it becomes clear how this process is to unfold, it may be appropriate for MAS to continue with the more detailed analysis of 9-1-1 issues as was originally planned by the Board.

*Approved by
Dan Presse,
Manager, Projects & Administration*

cc: Harold Murphy - Manager, Emergency Measures Unit
Randy Mar - Project Leader/Coordinator, Ottawa Transition Board
Susan Josselyn - Director, Management & Audit Services Division