



MEMBER RELEASE

October 30, 2013

TO: Mayor & Council | Chair & Board | Senior Staff
FROM: UBCM Secretariat
RE: **911 Services in British Columbia – Introduction of a Province Wide Call Answer Levy**

The purpose of this member release is to obtain further input from local government and to inform the members about a report that UBCM has prepared examining the issues surrounding the introduction of a uniform province wide Call Answer Levy (CAL) on wireless services to support and improve 911 services in British Columbia.

UBCM would request that you review the report and provide it with any comments or suggestions that you may have. The report provides a framework for introducing a province wide levy that would capture landlines and other electronic devices (i.e. cell phones, VOIP etc.) to support 911 services. We are using this opportunity to check in with the local government to ensure that is supportive of moving in this direction and would appreciate your views on this issue.

Attached is a copy of the report *“911 Services in British Columbia: Background Review in Relation to a Province-Wide Call Answer Levy”*. The report points out that the current 911 system in the Province was developed on a regional basis to meet local needs. The 911 emergency system is paid for by either a levy on landlines or by local property taxes.

The report examines three key issues:

1. How the 12 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) responsible for delivering the 911 system on a regional basis manage the 1.5 to 1.6 million calls it receives annually, the cost of the system, and some of the challenges it faces, such as gaps in coverage and abandoned calls.
2. How 911 systems operate in other jurisdictions when a CAL is in place and their legislative framework (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia).
3. What factors would need to be considered if a CAL was introduced for all wireless devices that connect to 911 services in British Columbia, such as the type of legislation required, the scope of services that the 911 funding could be used for, and how the funds would be managed.

A number of service gaps and technological changes in the delivery of 911 services are identified in the paper. These changes will require new revenue sources to meet public demand (i.e. video, pictures, text etc.). An increasing number of calls for 911 emergency services are coming from cell phone users, a trend which is expected to grow in the future as consumers expand their use of wireless services. Cell phone and other wireless users presently do not directly contribute, like users of landlines, to the provision of 911 services in British Columbia.

UBCM has undertaken a review of this policy for three reasons. The first reason is that UBCM members have endorsed a number of resolutions requesting that the Province introduce legislation that would allow the implementation of a Province wide levy on wireless services to help pay for the delivery of 911 emergency services (2012-LR 1; 2011-B13; 2009-B10 and 2004-SR 1). The second reason is a Supreme Court of BC decision in July of 2012 (*Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association v. Nanaimo City*) that quashed a City of Nanaimo Bylaw that required wireless service providers to pay a Call Answer Levy, a decision that highlighted the need for a solution to the problem so as to avoid future conflict in this area. Finally, UBCM received a letter from the Province that indicated that it was willing to work toward finding a solution to this issue.

UBCM has established a 911 Steering Committee made up of local government and provincial representatives to consider the issue. Ian MacDonald was hired to prepare a report on 911 services and to suggest a legislative framework to ensure that the resources are in place to improve the delivery of 911 services and to implement the next generation of 911 services (i.e. video, text messages etc.). Mr. MacDonald surveyed local governments that provide 911 services and prepared the background report that was sent out.

A workshop was held at the 2013 UBCM Convention to inform local government about the report that had been prepared and to discuss the future delivery and financing of 911 services in British Columbia.

UBCM would request that you provide any comments on the paper and your views on this issue by **November 29, 2013**.

Please forward your comments to Ken Vance at the UBCM Offices in Richmond at 604-270-8226 (ext. 114) or at kvance@ubcm.ca.