



Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

1593 Four Mile Creek Road
P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0
905-468-3266 www.notl.com

REPORT #: FES-23-011

COMMITTEE DATE: 2023-07-25

DUE IN COUNCIL: 2023-07-25

REPORT TO: Council

SUBJECT: Fire Services Dispatch Agreements

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council approves Bylaws 5528-23 and 5529-23 when presented to Council, so the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services (NOTLFES) are able to continue strong communications with a reliable Dispatch Provider.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- NOTLFES has actively been negotiating a revised contract with the Corporation of the City of St. Catharines to continue providing the Department with effective and reliable radio communications and keep firefighters safe during emergency calls.
- A contract has been reached between the City of St. Catharines and the NOTLFES that Staff believe is acceptable and will help serve the Department for years to come (**Appendix II**).
- The NOTLFES is seeking Council's support in passing the related bylaw.
- Additionally, the NOTLFES is seeking Council's support for another supplemental contract and associated bylaw (**Appendix III**) to maintain two separate digital radios for use during mutual aid calls within the Niagara Region.

3. PURPOSE

This report aims to outline the changes identified with the new Dispatch Agreement between the Corporation of the City of St. Catharines and the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake attached as **Appendix II**. Additionally, this report is to outline the details of a separate Supplemental Agreement which will permit the NOTLFES to maintain and operate two digital radios for use during any mutual aid calls within the Niagara Region – pursuant to the Region of Niagara Mutual Aid Plan 2023 attached as **Appendix III**.

4. BACKGROUND

The Corporation of the City of St. Catharines, specifically St. Catharines Fire Services, has been providing Dispatch Services for NOTLFES for more than 30 years. This partnership has worked well with very few concerns during this time.

5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

New Dispatch Agreement

The previous contract for dispatch services ended on December 31, 2021.

St. Catharines Fire was unable to produce a new contract by the end of the previous contract due to some internal shifts in their organization. However, the Fire Chief of St. Catharines Fire Services provided a direct letter to NOTLFES confirming that they would continue to provide dispatching services until a new agreement could be achieved, or if NOTLFES so chose, a new agreement with a different Dispatching Communication Centre could be reached. While waiting for the details of the new contract from St. Catharines fire, NOTLFES visited another Communication Centre so a review and comparison could be completed. The purpose of the review was to ensure the NOTLFES was making an informed decision in the best interest of the community.

After receiving and negotiating a revised contract with St. Catharines Fire, it is believed by the NOTLFES that signing a renewal agreement with St. Catharines Fire is in the best interest of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Specific items within the deal that vary from previous agreements include:

- A 15-year commitment for dispatching services. (Previous agreements have always been in 5-year increments. Both St. Catharines and NOTLFES were looking for longer-term commitments for continuity reasons.)
- An agreement that reduces percentage increases the longer the contract goes on.
- The ability to opt out of the contract at the tenth anniversary.
- Within the agreement, there is a requirement to upgrade the NOTLFES radio system to a digital system in approximately nine (9) years. If this upgrade is appropriately planned and saved for by the Municipality, it will be a manageable and likely necessary upgrade. Additionally if the NOTLFES decides not to upgrade its radio system, the Department can opt out of the agreement by providing adequate advance notice.

Supplemental Agreement

To finalize capital project C01260 – *Radio Infrastructure System Upgrade*, the NOTLFES was able to purchase two digital radios, which are intended to be placed within Tanker 2 and Tanker 5. This purchase is intended to provide NOTLFES firefighters with the ability to communicate with incident command during a mutual aid call where Niagara-on-the-Lake apparatus is dispatched into neighbouring communities to provide assistance providing rural area water supply. While NOTLFES currently operates on the analog radio system, most nearby communities where tanker apparatus would be called to operate are on a digital radio system. Providing firefighters with a digital radio would help ensure firefighter safety during an incident. The contract has been set up to run month to month, allowing the NOTLFES to cancel the contract at any time.

6. STRATEGIC PLAN

The content of this report supports the following Strategic Plan initiatives:

Pillar(s)

5. Strengthen 2-way Communications

Objective(s)

5.3 Strengthen communications delivery methods

Tactic(s)

5.3 b) Understand and meet the informational needs of all constituents

7. OPTIONS

- 7.1 **Option 1:** Council support or approve Bylaws 5528-23 and 5529-23 as presented. **(Recommended)**
- 7.2 **Option 2:** Council not support or approve Bylaws 5528-23 and 5529-23, thus sending NOTLFES back to St.Catharines, or another dispatch provider, to re-negotiate a new deal based on provided feedback from Council *(Not Recommended)*

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

New Dispatch Agreement

As per the payment schedule attached within the Dispatch Agreement Documents and associated 5528-23, the current annual rate for 2023 is \$65,964. The remaining payment Schedule has been attached to this report as **Appendix I**.

Supplemental Agreement

The Supplemental Agreement requires the NOTLFES to pay \$50.00 monthly per radio for the duration of the contract. This equates to \$100 per month to maintain the use of the two digital radios.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications associated with these contracts.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

Upon Council's approval of the by-laws, the City of St. Catharines will be notified.

11. CONCLUSION

The NOTLFES requests that Council approve Bylaws 5528-23 and 5529-23 as they will continue to provide NOTLFES firefighters with the ability to effectively and confidently communicate during emergencies, ultimately keeping the Town's volunteer firefighters safe.

12. PREVIOUS REPORTS

- N/A; there are no previous reports associated with these contracts.

13. APPENDICES

- **Appendix I** – Payment Schedule
- **Appendix II** – By-law 5528-23 St Catharines Computer Aided Fire Services Agreement
- **Appendix III** – By-law 5529-23 St Catharines the P25 System Agreement

Respectfully submitted:

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jay Plato", with a stylized, flowing script.

**Jay Plato, Fire Chief
Fire & Emergency Services**

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Cluckie", with a stylized, flowing script.

**Marnie Cluckie, MS.LOD, B.ARCH, B.ES
Chief Administrative Officer**