

Subject: 9-1-1 Annual Report 2021 and 2022

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**Report to Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee on 18 May
2023**

and Council 24 May 2023

Submitted on May 9, 2023 by Beth Gooding, Director, Public Safety Service

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REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Service Agreement for the 9-1-1 emergency call service for the City of Ottawa is managed through the Public Safety Service within the Emergency and Protective Services department. This report provides information on Ottawa's 9-1-1 service for 2021 and 2022, including key performance metrics and call volume statistics.

The Public Safety Service will continue to work with the Ottawa Police Services Board (as represented by the Ottawa Police Service) to ensure that the City's 9-1-1 service continues to meet resident needs, including for Next Generation 9-1-1, which represents a transition to a whole new end-to-end digital system that will eventually enable new user functionality.

BACKGROUND

The Public Safety Service within the Emergency and Protective Services Department has the responsibility to manage the 9-1-1 service contract for the City of Ottawa. 9-1-1 is an emergency call-for-service, telephone-based response system to access first responders including Police, Paramedic and Fire Services. Ottawa's 9-1-1 service is contracted to the Ottawa Police Services Board, as represented by the Ottawa Police Service. The Public Safety Service manages the contract with the Ottawa Police Services Board and negotiates the provision of the 9-1-1 telephone service with Bell Canada.

The Public Safety Service is required to report to Committee and Council annually on the Ottawa Police Services Board's compliance with the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement but due to the continued COVID-19 response efforts and various Emergency Operations Centre mobilizations last year, the 2021 report was deferred. This report therefore provides information for 2021 and 2022, including key performance metrics and call volume statistics.

In Ottawa, the 9-1-1 system operates in the following manner. An individual calls 9-1-1 from a landline or cell phone. The telephone service provider (Bell Canada) directs the call to the Primary Public Safety Answering Point, which in Ottawa is the Ottawa Police Service at 474 Elgin Street. Calls for Ottawa Police Service are handled by the Primary Public Safety Answering Point agent directly without transfer. Calls for other types of assistance are transferred to the appropriate Secondary Public Safety Answering Point at one of the other emergency services (i.e., the Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Fire Services, Ontario Provincial Police, Gatineau 9-1-1, Royal Canadian Mounted Police or Canadian Forces Support Unit). Call takers at the Secondary Public Safety Answering Point assess the call and dispatch the appropriate response resources.

DISCUSSION

Since amalgamation, the City manages the Service Agreement with the Ottawa Police Services Board, as represented by the Ottawa Police Service. The Service Agreement includes items related to performance management, reporting processes, testing of back-up equipment, staff training, staffing levels and contract management. Information related to the key components of the agreement are provided in further detail below.

Performance Management

The following are the key contractual performance measures included in the Service Level Agreement between the City and the Ottawa Police Services Board:

1. That a minimum number of 9-1-1 call takers are on duty at all times.
2. That the number of call takers is adjusted according to call volume demand.
3. That 97 per cent of all calls be answered within six seconds from the time a call is received.

For 2021 and 2022, the first two measures were consistently achieved. There was, however, a degradation in service level for the third measure. In 2021, for example, 86 percent of all calls were answered within six seconds. In 2022, that metric fell to 81 percent.

The City has been working with the Ottawa Police Service to assess the rationale behind the decrease in service standard. For example, call volume statistics are trending upwards again (post-COVID 2020 numbers), and in some cases, the nature of the call may require a longer discussion between the caller and the 9-1-1 operator.

Table 1: Call Volume Percentage Change

Year	Number of calls	Percentage change
2018	280, 102	+9.3%*
2019	303, 328	+8.3%
2020	284, 259	-6.3%
2021	317, 766	+11.8%
2022	348, 567	+9.7%

**Based on a total call volume of 256,294 calls in 2017*

In addition, the Ottawa Police Service upgraded internal systems in 2021 as part of the transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 which resulted in some data integrity issues. The Ottawa Police Service is ensuring that it continues to focus on resolving these data issues so that the performance metric related to the minimum standard for answering calls, can be fully validated.

We are also aware that this same performance metric is an issue for other Primary Public Safety Answering Points in Canada. There have been media reports, for example, indicating that the Toronto Police Service only met its minimum standard for answering calls during 11 days in 2022. Their standard is that 90 per cent of all 9-1-1 calls must be answered within 15 seconds. In addition, Peel Region has confirmed that they met their minimum standards for answering calls only 36 per cent of the time in 2022. Their standard is that 90 per cent of all 9-1-1 calls must be answered within 15 second and 95 per cent of all 9-1-1 calls should be answered within 20 seconds.

The City and the Ottawa Police Service are implementing several mitigation measures. For example, we will be increasing our public information campaigns to help residents know when to call 9-1-1, when to call the Ottawa Police Service's non-emergency line to report non-urgent police matters, or when to call somewhere else such as 3-1-1. The Ottawa Police Service is also reviewing various options both from an operational and technical perspective to increase efficiencies and improve the service level provided to the public.

The City will continue to monitor this performance metric as part of its oversight role related to the Service Level Agreement.

Call Volume

Call volume for the purpose of this report refers to emergency calls answered by the 9-1-1 service only. On occasion, 9-1-1 calls are made directly to the emergency services (the Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Fire Services, and other Secondary Public Safety Answering Points). Accordingly, there is not a direct one-to-one relationship between calls answered by the 9-1-1 service and total calls received individually by the Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Fire Services, and other Secondary Public Safety Answering Points at their respective dispatch centres.

It is also important to note that the nature of some calls to 9-1-1 necessitate that more than one emergency service respond to the scene. The City of Ottawa has a "Tiered Response Activation Agreement" in place that enables the lead responding agency to request support from another emergency service. For example, the Ottawa Police Service are the lead on motor vehicle collisions (except for the 400-series highways, which are an Ontario Provincial Police lead). If Police determine on scene that an extrication is required, they will request support from Ottawa Fire Services.

Therefore, the data in Table 2 is the total number of emergency phone calls initially received by 9-1-1 but it does not correlate with overall response volumes, including those cases where another agency was “tiered” to a response.

Table 2: 2020 to 2022 Summary of Call Volume

Type of Call Volume	2020	2021	2022
Total Calls	284, 259	317, 766	348, 567
Daily Average	779	871	955
Calls for Service - Ottawa Police Service	64.1%	66%	63%
Calls for Service - Ottawa Paramedic Service	30.5%	29%	31%
Calls for Service - Ottawa Fire Services	3.1%	2.5%	2.8%
Calls for Service - Other Services ¹	2.7%	2.5%	3.2%

Table 3 outlines the call source data of 9-1-1 calls from 2018 to 2022.

Table 3: 2018 to 2022 Call Source Data

Year	Cellular	Residential landlines	Other ²
2018	73%	10%	17%
2019	74%	10%	16%
2020	77%	9%	14%
2021	79%	7.5%	13.5%
2022	80%	6.7%	13.6%

¹ Other services include the Ontario Provincial Police, Quebec 9-1-1, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Canadian Forces Support Unit.

² Other sources include commercial single line and push button, public pay phone, Centrex, multi-party line (commercial and residential) and unknown.

Complaints Reporting

Complaints are also assessed as part of the Service Agreement with the Ottawa Police. Once a service complaint is received from the public to 9-1-1, the complainant is contacted by the Ottawa Police Service to review the circumstances surrounding the complaint including the information exchange that occurred with the call taker. Where issues and/or complaints are of a significant nature and could result in corporate risk; the Bureau Manager, Support Services at the Ottawa Police Service is required to contact the Director, Public Safety Service. In 2021 and 2022, no complaints of this nature were received.

In 2021, the 9-1-1 service received seven public complaints, and in 2022, there were ten public complaints. Almost all 17 complaints over this two-year reporting period were administrative in nature, with the exception of two complaints in 2021 and one complaint in 2022 related to call response wait times. Overall, upon investigation by the Ottawa Police Service Bureau Manager, only seven complaints over the two-year period required some follow-up with the operator, as a learning/service improvement opportunity. The rest of the complaints were deemed to be unfounded.

Testing of Backup Equipment

The 9-1-1 backup facility and equipment is visually inspected and tested by Ottawa Police Service on a monthly basis with the status reported to the Director, Public Safety Service.

Training Requirements for Staff and Staffing Levels

Ottawa Police Service is responsible for providing on-the-job and classroom training to all staff performing 9-1-1 duties such that performance standards, standard operating procedures and accredited standards for Communicators/Dispatchers as provided by the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Ontario are met. The minimum staffing levels, as outlined in the 9-1-1 Purchase of Service Agreement, were met in 2021 and 2022.

Contract Management

The Service Agreement is reviewed annually, prior to budget, by the Bureau Manager, Support Services at Ottawa Police Service and by the Director, Public Safety Service on an annual basis. In addition, the Ottawa Police Service submits a bi-annual report to the Director, Public Safety Service outlining performance measure results and other relevant information regarding the operation of the 9-1-1 system.

In July 2022, the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Police Services Board renewed the Service Level Agreement. No significant changes were made to the terms and conditions of the contract, noting that a new Service Level Agreement – that will include significant updates – will be required when the City transitions to Next Generation 9-1-1 in early 2025.

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1)

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission has mandated that new technology, known as Next Generation 9-1-1 be implemented nationally by March 4, 2025. Next Generation 9-1-1 refers to an initiative aimed at updating the 9-1-1 service infrastructure in Canada to create a faster, more resilient system that will eventually allow for text messages, photos, and videos to flow seamlessly from the public to the 9-1-1 network.

This end-to-end digital technology implementation is a significant change management initiative. The City is working closely with the Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Fire Services, and other stakeholders to ensure that our transition work is supported by a strong governance/oversight structure. In addition to the change in technology infrastructure, we are planning for requirements such as operator training, public engagement and new system security measures.

We will continue to engage through Committee and Council, and the Ottawa Police Services Board to provide regular updates.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving the information in this report.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

There are no comments from Ward Councillors as this report is city-wide in nature.

CONSULTATION

There were no consultations undertaken related to the recommendations of this report. The Public Safety Service is committed to consulting and collaborating with residents and community partners to ensure the safety of all in Ottawa.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

The 9-1-1 service provides emergency response for people with disabilities in line with the obligations of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, 191/11.

In 2015, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission instituted a Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Impaired hardware upgrade for the 9-1-1 service. This was implemented in Ottawa in Q1 2016 and enables registered Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Impaired callers to send text messages once a traditional call connection to 9-1-1 is made.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

As per the [Delegation of Authority By-law 2023-67](#), Schedule F – Emergency and Protective Services department, Section 2, Public Safety Service manages the contract with Ottawa Police Services Board and negotiates the provision of the 9-1-1 telephone service with Bell Canada.

The Public Safety Service reports annually to Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee with the other service areas in Emergency and Protective Services. The last reporting was on March 30 via the [Use of Delegated Authority in 2022 by Emergency and Protective Services](#).

There are no new delegated authority requirements associated with this information report.

CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

The Public Safety Service is a key stakeholder in the City's Climate Resiliency Strategy. Forecasting studies led by the City's Climate Resiliency group indicate that Ottawa is expected to become warmer and wetter over the next several decades. This warming due to climate change favors conditions conducive to extreme weather such as storms, tornadoes, and wildfires. The nexus to 9-1-1 is that, in the immediate aftermath of a significant weather event, there is always an increase in calls for service to 9-1-1.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Public Safety Service considers and manages risk within the service area. These risks have been articulated throughout the report as well as their mitigation strategies.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific rural implications associated with the recommendations of this report. However, the Public Safety Service does consider the varying needs of those living in different parts of the city when developing Emergency Plans.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The services provided by Public Safety Service continue to align with the 2019 – 2022 Term of Council Priority of Thriving Communities: Promote safety, culture, social and physical well-being for our residents.

DISPOSITION

The Public Safety Service will implement any direction arising from receipt of this information report.