



## **FIRE SERVICES** *Staff Report*

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REPORT NO: FS-2024-07

TO: Council

SUBMITTED BY: Rod Leeson, Fire Chief

PREPARED BY: Rod Leeson, Fire Chief

REVIEWED BY: Sharon Chambers, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: 2024-05-06

SUBJECT: Voice Radio Service Level Agreement (P25)

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Report FS-2024-07 be received and Council approves entering a joint P25 Voice Radio Service Level Agreement with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Police Services Board, the Region of Waterloo, and the Cities of Kitchener, Cambridge, Waterloo, and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, and Woolwich, subject to any minor revisions as required by the Chief Administrative Officer and/or Township Solicitor.

AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute the joint P25 Voice Radio Service Level Agreement on behalf of the Township of Wilmot and the Waterloo Region Police Services Board, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, the Cities of Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo, and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, and Woolwich.

### **SUMMARY:**

This Report is to provide information and context for the consideration and approval of Council for the joint P25 Voice Radio Service Level Agreement as part of a partnership with the Waterloo Region Police Services (WRPS), the Region of Waterloo and the six other Waterloo Region area municipalities.

## BACKGROUND:

Before 2020, voice radio user groups (these include the Waterloo Regional Police Services, the Region of Waterloo (the Region), the Cities of Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo, and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich) utilized a trunked 800 MHz simulcast Enhanced Digital Access Communications System (EDACS). EDACS technology was developed in the late 1980's. The system was installed in the region in the early 1990s and its active use spanned over the next 25 years. The EDACS voice radio system provided functionality for the existing primary user groups of law enforcement and fire departments as well as other affiliated departments across the Region such as public transportation, animal control, and public works.

Recognizing the need for common standards for first responders and response professionals, representatives from the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials International (APCO), established Project 25 (P25), a steering committee for selecting voluntary common system standards for digital public safety radio communications. In 2014, the Region brought local user groups together and collectively recognized deficiencies in its aging radio communications system. These deficiencies included system 'end of life', coverage, capacity, inoperability, features, and reliability. These identified deficiencies were not uncommon to emergency service providers using EDACS technology.

Along with first responders and response professionals, the APCO steering committee established voluntary common system standards for digital public safety radio communications through P25 that have become the industry standard across Canada and the US. Today, modern voice radio systems are referred to as "P25" radio systems in the same way that old technology is referred to as 'EDACS' radio systems.

Recognizing industry standards, the Region desired to build a communications system that would provide state-of-the-art communications for emergency responders and various user groups within the region. Locally, it was agreed to advance regulations established by the APCO.

As a result of a competitive bidding process, the Region confirmed Motorola and Partner Employees as the vendors to replace the EDACS system with modern technology (i.e. communication towers and dispatch center equipment) and user gear (i.e. mobile and portable radios).

In 2017, a staff report was brought forward and approved by Council to implement the voice radio project authorizing the purchase of user gear and ancillary equipment for use by the Township's Fire Department, Public Works, and By-law Enforcement Division. Due to unforeseen additional costs both public works and by-law opted out of the program. The user gear was delivered in 2018 and the Township Fire Services is presently utilizing the P25 voice radio technology.

The user agreement completion was delayed due to a variety of factors. This staff report requests Council's approval to finalize the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that has been

prepared by The Regional Municipality of Waterloo Police Services Board and reviewed by Duncan Linton, LLP on behalf of area municipalities and reviewed by area municipality CAO's.

## REPORT:

### **The Voice Radio Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Key Components:**

All user groups are required to enter an SLA which sets out, among other terms and conditions, the user will:

- Have access to and have the right to use the P25 Voice Radio System throughout the Region of Waterloo; and,
- Have obligations because of being connected to the P25 Voice Radio system.

### **Governance**

Various committees will be established to enable responsibilities set out in the Service Level Agreement including:

- Operations Steering Committee - Mandate: Assist the Voice Radio Manager in the day-to-day decisions, and operations, providing information, feedback and recommendations.
- Finance Committee - Mandate: Preparation and oversight of the budget and financial decision-making, providing information, feedback, and recommendations.
- Governance Committee - Mandate: The overall oversight/decision-maker regarding the budget and matters that would impact the financial or long-term viability of the collective P25 initiative dispute resolution.

### **Operation of the P25 Voice Radio Infrastructure (System)**

The WRPS is solely responsible for acquiring ownership, leasing rights to or license rights associated with the system including the operation, maintenance and as necessary, replacement infrastructure. The WRPS is further responsible for maintaining system software and security. Of interest, WRPS is not responsible for agency user gear (i.e. mobile and portable radios); this is the responsibility of each user agency.

### **Obligations of the Agency (Township of Wilmot)**

In addition to adequately training staff, the agency is responsible for the purchase, licensing, replacement, and maintenance of user gear. The WRPS will carry out such inspections, tests, and programming to ensure that the agency's gear is secure and compatible with the system. As set out in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

R.S.O. 1990.c.M.56, the agency is required to collaborate with other parties and the WRPS to ensure the information that is the property of or intended to be exclusively controlled by another agency is properly controlled.

### **Ownership**

The Agency (Township of Wilmot) acknowledges that it has no ownership in or greater rights to the system or system infrastructure than granted in the agreement(s).

### **Term of the Service Level Agreement**

The term of the agreement will commence once it is signed and will continue to be in effect until the date on which it is terminated in accordance with the expectations set out in the agreement. Upon Council's approval, the Township of Wilmot expects to enter into agreement with the Regional Municipality of Police Services Board once signing has been completed.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This report is aligned with the Strategic Plan goal of enjoying our quality of life by ensuring people's safety. In addition, it aligns with being an engaged community by reviewing operational efficiencies and the use of resources.

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

The P25 Voice Radio budget is based upon anticipated/projected costs and liabilities for the following year subject to the approval of the Governance Committee. The Service Level Agreement identifies the annual system cost based on the number of radios included in a party's gear (the party's share of the annual system cost will not be reduced unless specifically agreed upon because of the reduction of radios).

It is important to note the supply by WRPS of any services to any party that does not benefit all parties will not be considered an annual system cost. In this way, such charges will be invoiced to the benefitting service recipient only. Future capital replacement costs for voice radio infrastructure (ie: telecommunication towers; software, etc) will be budgeted by the Region of Waterloo.

On an annual basis, the Finance Committee will prepare a system budget thereby setting out system costs for the ensuing period. The Governance Committee maintains the authority to establish, create, allocate, or request funds from the parties through a special levy towards a reasonable and prudent reserve. Table 1 is the total projected cost of the system and the Township of North Dumfries' portion of costs. The Township's portion is based on the percentage of radios North Dumfries currently owns. Table 2 shows the number of radios each municipality/group owns.

**Table 1: Annual operating and capital costs and Township of Wilmot fees:**

Description	Cost (2023 \$)
The Regional Municipality of Police Services Board Waterloo/Waterloo Regional Police (Total cost)	\$3,257,913
Township of Wilmot	\$118,692
Township of Wilmot percentage of fees	3.2%

**Table 2: Radios owned by municipality/group:**

Responsible Municipality / Group	Total Radios	Radios %
City of Cambridge	116	4.3%
City of Kitchener	211	7.8%
City of Waterloo	180	6.6%
Kiwanis Transit	13	.5%
Township of North Dumfries	31	1.1%
Regional Municipality of Waterloo	755	27.8%
St. John Ambulance	18	.7%
Waterloo Regional Police Services	1107	40.8%
Township of Wellesley	72	2.7%
<b>Township of Wilmot</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
Township of Woolwich	111	4.1%
WR React	15	.6%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,715</b>	<b>100%</b>

Before the implementation of P25 technology the Township was not required to fund the operating and capital costs associated with the former EDACs technology that was owned and operated by the Region of Waterloo. The Township is now responsible for a portion of the total annual cost of Voice Radio operations among regional users as per the provided chart.

For 2022 the Township paid \$95,088 for the delivery of the P25 voice radio program. For 2023 the Township paid \$118,692 for the delivery of the P25 voice radio program. The 2024 Budget numbers were still under review and not available during budget deliberations for the P25 voice radio program, once finalized by the Finance Committee and the Governance Committee, the 2024 allowance may include a shortfall.

The Township, as part of the annual Fire Department budget for Dispatch/Radio/Pager Repairs and Maintenance, includes funds for the replacement of user gear (ie: portable radios, mobiles, pagers) as the situation arises due to equipment failure or damaged equipment. The life cycle of radio equipment is approximately 15 years and is identified in long-term capital to replace base, mobile, and portable radios.

ATTACHMENTS:

Voice Radio Execution Version (10.20.23)