



911 Levy No Longer Under Consideration

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A UBCM working group looking into the potential for a province-wide levy on all wireless devices that connect to 911 services has concluded that there is not sufficient support for this initiative among BC local governments.

The review into the delivery of 911 services was undertaken by the Union of BC Municipalities in partnership with the Province. The goal was to expand province-wide 911 service, improve public safety, and to look at ways that changes to the system might be funded through a province-wide levy on wireless devices. The funding formula was to be agreed to by the Province, local government and industry. To facilitate this process UBCM created a working group and hired a consultant to prepare a report on the issue, the report was considered at the 2013 UBCM Convention and endorsed.

A number of service gaps and technological changes in the delivery of 911 services were identified in the paper. The report pointed out that these changes would require new revenue sources to meet public demand due to the variety of platforms that BC residents now use for communication such as video streaming, photo sharing and text messaging.

Following the 2013 Convention, UBCM tested support for a province-wide levy on wireless devices. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Board considered the issue, but did not support the levy since it would likely increase the cost of the service to local taxpayers. Currently 911 services are funded in the GVRD through an assessment-based property tax at a cost of approximately \$4.00 per household.

After receiving feedback from members on the issue, UBCM consulted with the working group on the next steps in the process and it was agreed that there was no opportunity to move forward at this time. However, a number of the local governments involved in the process indicated that they might pursue the issue on a local basis and examine the introduction of a 911 levy on wireless devices at a regional level.

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