

Toronto Police Service - Audit of 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point Operations Better Support for Staff, Improved Information Management and Outcomes

Date: June 24, 2022
To: Audit Committee
From: Auditor General
Wards: All

SUMMARY

Toronto Police Service (TPS) operates a Communications Centre (call centre) that acts as the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the City of Toronto. The communications operators at the call centre answer all emergency 9-1-1 calls across the City. Depending on the emergency response needed, the operators transfer the calls to fire services, ambulance, and/or other agencies, and dispatch police services when needed.

As the 9-1-1 PSAP for the City, the TPS call centre has a crucial role in ensuring the safety and security of the people of Toronto and their properties. It is the first point of contact for those who call for emergency assistance during times of distress. The timeliness of call answering is critical so that people receive the appropriate emergency response needed as soon as possible, as a person's life or safety can often be at risk. The assessment made by communications operators determines the priority level, which impacts the timeliness of emergency response. Also, the decision on whether a call is dispatched or not for police services has a direct impact on the first level of front-line police resourcing required.

The Toronto Police Services Board (TPSB) requested the Auditor General to complete a risk assessment of TPS to develop a risk-based audit plan. The audit of the TPS's 9-1-1 operations was included in the Auditor General's 2021 Audit Plan.

In the February 2021 meetings, as part of City Council's decisions discussing the Community Crisis Support Service, City Council requested the Auditor General to prioritize her planned 2021 audit of the TPS's 9-1-1 operations. City Council also directed the City Manager for an overview of 9-1-1 operations and an analysis of the feasibility of moving 9-1-1 operations from TPS to a non-police City service. Further,

that the City Manager's analysis be informed by any findings made by the Auditor General in the context of her audits of TPS.

We have completed the audit of 9-1-1 operations. The audit was to assess whether the TPS's 9-1-1 Communications Centre provides access to emergency services in an effective and timely manner and identifying potential areas of improvement to the efficiency and economy of operations. The audit made 26 recommendations to the TPSB in the following five key areas. Five of these recommendations were also made to the City Manager's Office and relevant City's Divisions.

1. Answering calls
2. Assigning call event types and priority levels
3. Dispatch and response times to emergency events
4. New technology, 9-1-1 levies, and other opportunities
5. Community education and awareness

This report contains five recommendations made to the City Manager's Office and applicable City divisions for consideration by City Council that are relevant to the City's management response. The list of these recommendations referenced between the review report and this report can be found in Attachment 2 (Appendix 2 with references). The full list of the Auditor General's recommendations made to both City Council and the Toronto Police Services Board can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

The audit report was tabled at the June 22, 2022 Toronto Police Services Board meeting. The agenda for the meeting and the report are available at:

<https://tpsb.ca/jdownloads-categories?task=download.send&id=733&catid=32&m=0>

The Toronto Police Services Board will forward a transmittal on its actions to the Audit Committee for information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Auditor General recommends that:

1. City Council request the Chief, Toronto Paramedic Services and Chief, Toronto Fire Services, and request the Toronto Police Services Board to direct the Chief, Toronto Police Service to regularly review the information on timeliness of transferred 9-1-1 calls to Toronto Paramedic Services and Toronto Fire Services, with the view to working together to meet the 9-1-1 emergency call service level standards. The entities should meet, when needed, to determine if any changes are needed to established protocols to ensure the safety of citizens.
2. City Council request the Chief, Toronto Paramedic Services and Chief, Toronto Fire Services, and request the Toronto Police Services Board to direct the Chief, Toronto Police Service, in collaboration with Toronto Paramedic Services and Toronto Fire Services, to achieve live-time interconnectivity in communication on 9-1-1 calls and

events amongst these entities, both currently, and in the implementation of the Next Generation 9-1-1 solution moving forward; this should include consideration of an interface of the Intergraph Computer Aided Dispatch system to allow for improved communication during 9-1-1 call transfers and events, and to specifically assist with communication where Toronto Police Service are no longer required by Toronto Paramedic Services and/or Toronto Fire Services as applicable, so as to avoid unnecessarily committing police resources.

3. City Council request the City Manager, in consultation with Toronto Police Services Board, Toronto Police Service (TPS), and City's Legal Services, to include the following to inform its feasibility review of whether to move the 9-1-1 operations to a non-police City Service:

a. Fulsome cost/benefit analysis that includes the potential impact to call answer and call response time of police, fire, and ambulance, and the other related functions of the call centre such as audio and data requests including for court proceedings, and maintenance of radio communications.

b. Cost impact and feasibility with regards to staffing, given the current collective agreement of communications operators.

c. Legislative feasibility given the current draft and forthcoming legislative requirements related to the delivery of policing and related services, in particular, the involvement of the police service in the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) dispatching function.

d. Legal risk and who would be responsible for those 9-1-1 calls and/or alternate non-police response where police are not dispatched, and it results in a negative outcome.

e. Governance model for PSAP with the view to enhance interoperability and coordination of emergency response services delivered.

f. The goals and outcomes that are intended through a potential move of the 9-1-1 operations, and whether other strategies may be more effective, efficient, and economical to achieve those, such as offering another phone number for non-police response such as 2-1-1, and/or working together with TPS on other strategies, including but not limited to, updating the 9-1-1 communications operators manual, additional training, data and technological supports for communications operators and police officers, and increased public education and awareness.

4. City Council request the City Manager and request the Toronto Police Services Board to direct the Chief, Toronto Police Service, in collaboration with the City, to undertake public education campaigns (including targeted awareness programs) and ongoing public education initiatives to improve public awareness and understanding on distinguishing between the various lines and the proper use of 9-1-1, the non-emergency line (416-808-2222), online police reporting, and other non-police alternative resources, including promotion of 2-1-1 (assistance in connecting people with

community and social service resources) and 3-1-1 and City Council request that an assessment be made to evaluate the effectiveness of these campaigns and initiatives on call behaviours; such campaign and/or initiatives should:

- a. Include strategies to increase public awareness on what to do when the caller dials 9-1-1, including the specific information that needs to be provided to the call taker in order to shorten police response time, how to prevent pocket dials, and what to do when an individual dials 9-1-1 by mistake.
- b. Be multi-lingual.
- c. Be refreshed and refocused periodically to address the 9-1-1 call analysis results to reduce unnecessary or avoidable non-emergency related calls to 9-1-1.

5. City Council request the City Manager and request the Toronto Police Services Board to direct the Chief, Toronto Police Service (TPS), in collaboration with the City, to consider a shorter and easier to remember number (if possible three digits) for TPS's dedicated non-emergency line.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

We estimated a potential annual 9-1-1 levy revenue of \$28.8 million (\$144 million over five-year period) using a monthly levy of \$1 per mobile device subscriber in Toronto, contingent on an approved change to legislation in Ontario so that telecommunication service providers can charge and remit to these levies to the PSAP, which is the practice in most other provinces. This potential revenue will increase as Toronto's population and number of mobile phone subscribers continues to increase and if it also applies to landline phone number. This potential funding could assist TPS with implementing the NG9-1-1 requirements and some of the recommendations in the audit report.

The precise extent of any resources required or non-quantifiable benefits to the safety of people of Toronto and their properties from the improved 9-1-1 PSAP operations and related emergency and alternative responses resulting from implementing the recommendations in this report is not determinable at this time.

DECISION HISTORY

At the request for the Toronto Police Services Board (TPSB), the Auditor General completed a risk assessment of TPS to develop a risk-based audit plan. This plan was independently developed by the Auditor General and sets the audit priorities at TPS over the next five years.

The Auditor General's 2021 Audit Plan included an audit of the TPS's 9-1-1 operations with a focus on examining its effectiveness and efficiency.

The Auditor General's 2021 work plan can be found at:

[Agenda Item History - 2020.AU7.5 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

As part of City Council's decisions discussing the Community Crisis Support Service at its February 2, 3, and 5, 2021 meetings, recommendation 10 requested the Auditor General to prioritize her planned 2021 audit of the Toronto Police Service's 9-1-1 operations. City Council's recommendation 12 directed the City Manager for an overview of the current 9-1-1 operations, the municipal, provincial or federal legal and regulatory framework that applies to the delivery, management, and supervision of 9-1-1 operations, and an analysis of the feasibility of moving 9-1-1 operations from TPS to a non-police City service. The City Manager's analysis is to be informed by any findings made by the Auditor General in the context of her audits of the TPS.

[Agenda Item History - 2021.EX20.1 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

COMMENTS

A high-level summary of the key audit findings is provided in the Audit at a Glance.

The attached audit report provides the Audit Committee and members of Council with the detailed audit results and recommendations together with management's response. City Management has agreed to all five relevant recommendations - see Appendix 2 for the City's management response.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 -

Toronto Police Service – Audit of 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point Operations

Better Support for Staff, Improved Information Management and Outcomes

Attachment 2 -

Appendix 2 with References to Cover Report:

City Management's Response to Relevant Recommendations to the Auditor General's

Report Entitled: "Toronto Police Service – Audit of 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point Operations: Better Support for Staff, Improved Information Management and Outcomes"