

Public Education on Personal Emergency Preparedness

(City Council on December 14, 15 and 16, 1999, amended this Clause by:

- (1) striking out Recommendation No. (1) of the Policy and Finance Committee and inserting in lieu thereof the following new Recommendation No. (1):*

“(1) that the emergency preparedness information be distributed through the Toronto Hydro bills at a cost of approximately \$38,000.00;” and

- (2) adding thereto the following:*

“It is further recommended that:

- (a) the Public and Separate School Boards be requested to consider including personal emergency preparedness as part of the education curriculum;*
- (b) the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services be requested to:*
- (i) ensure that the distribution of emergency preparedness information is carried out on an ongoing basis;*
 - (ii) encourage all community newspapers in the City of Toronto to include emergency preparedness information in their publications as soon as possible;*
 - (iii) provide information on what services will be made available by the City in the event of an emergency; and*
 - (iv) submit a report to the Policy and Finance Committee on how the remaining 250,000 households who do not receive Toronto Hydro bills will have the personal emergency preparedness brochure distributed to them and the cost implications thereof; and*
- (c) the report dated December 9, 1999, from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services, embodying the following recommendation, be adopted:*

‘It is recommended that, in addition to distributing personal emergency preparedness information in Toronto Hydro bills (as recommended by the Policy and Finance Committee on December 7, 1999), the Parks and Recreation booklet be used to distribute information at a cost of approximately \$6,000.00.’ ”)

The Policy and Finance Committee recommends:

- (1) the adoption of the following Recommendation No. (2) embodied in the report (November 16, 1999) from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services:**

- “(2) if the Community Services Committee requests that personal emergency preparedness information be distributed, but not to all residents, then the option of the pamphlet and Toronto Hydro bills be selected at a cost of approximately \$38,000:”;**
- (2) that the material on personal emergency preparedness be made available at all libraries and recreation centres to allow the public to obtain this information; and**
- (3) that staff in the Y2K office be requested to assist community groups with the distribution of their materials.**

The Policy and Finance Committee submits the following communication (December 1, 1999) from the City Clerk:

Recommendation:

The Community Services Committee on December 1, 1999, recommended to the Policy and Finance Committee the adoption of the option referred to in Recommendation No. (1) and Recommendation No. (3) of the attached report dated November 16, 1999, from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services respecting Public Education on Personal Emergency Preparedness, viz:

- (1) personal emergency preparedness information be distributed to all residents, and the option of the pamphlet and Canada Post be selected at a cost of approximately \$91,000.00; and
- (2) the media not be used as the sole or primary method of information dissemination.

The Community Services Committee reports, for the information of the Policy and Finance Committee, and Council, having requested the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services to report directly to Council for its meeting on December 14, 1999, on the feasibility of including the emergency preparedness information in existing publications, such as “Waste Watch”, the Parks and Recreation Brochure, Councillor’s Newsletters, etc.

(Report dated November 16, 1999, addressed to the
Community Services Committee from the
Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services)

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide information on options for educating the public on personal emergency preparedness.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Financial implications will be as described in this report for whatever option is selected. The required funding will be included in the 2000 Operating Budget.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) if the Community Services Committee requests that personal emergency preparedness information be distributed to all residents, then the option of the pamphlet and Canada Post be selected at a cost of approximately \$91,000.00; or
- (2) if the Community Services Committee requests that personal emergency preparedness information be distributed, but not to all residents, then the option of the pamphlet and Toronto Hydro bills be selected at a cost of approximately \$38,000.00; and
- (3) the media not be used as the sole or primary method of information dissemination.

Background:

At the meeting of the Community Services Committee on September 9, 1999, the Committee directed “that the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services be requested to report to the Community Services Committee, as soon as possible, on the necessary funding required to prepare a pamphlet for distribution to all citizens in the City of Toronto respecting steps that could be taken by citizens in regard to various emergency situations”. The Committee also requested review and comment on the motion “that the information to citizens be disseminated through the media rather than by pamphlet”.

Comments:

The Fire Services Division of the Works and Emergency Services Department is taking the lead on personal emergency preparedness public education. It has added four pages of Toronto information to a 24-page brochure, entitled “Be Prepared, Not Scared: Emergency Preparedness Starts With You,” written by Emergency Preparedness Canada and the Canadian Red Cross.

This detailed brochure suggests procedures, priorities and checklists that citizens should act on in order to be prepared for any kind of emergency. One hundred thousand of these brochures are being distributed in Toronto through local fire stations, police stations, community centres, etc. with another 100,000 printed recently.

Works and Emergency Services communications staff have prepared a synopsis of “Be Prepared, Not Scared” and turned it into a pamphlet. It pays particular attention to the items that residents should acquire to prepare home and vehicle emergency kits and the procedures they should follow before and during an emergency. This pamphlet has been translated into six languages (5,000 copies each of Chinese, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Tamil and Somali) and we are

working with the Canadian Red Cross Society to distribute the pamphlets within the various ethno-racial communities.

There are approximately 900,000 houses and apartments in the City of Toronto. It would cost more than \$200,000 to reprint enough copies of “Be Prepared, Not Scared” to provide one to every household, plus the cost of distribution. To print 900,000 copies of the smaller pamphlet described above would cost approximately \$25,000.00.

With respect to distribution, there are a number of options available. To reach all 900,000 households in the City, a distribution company or Canada Post would have to be used. We could also insert the pamphlet into a Toronto Hydro billing, to go out in January or February 2000; however, the billing only goes to 650,000 households. (It could cost us approximately \$13,000.00 for the Toronto Hydro mailing if the weight of our pamphlets causes an increase in their postal costs.)

A distribution company will charge approximately 4.5 cents per piece plus GST. It can distribute to houses, apartments and businesses; however, the carriers often cannot get into apartment building mail rooms so leave piles of material in the front lobby where they are not picked up or are thrown out by the superintendent. Distribution can take as long as four to six weeks for the whole City. While inexpensive, the service can be unreliable – on occasion stacks of materials have been found in dumpsters. To distribute to 900,000 households would cost approximately \$44,000.00.

Canada Post charges 6.825 cents per piece for houses and apartments, plus GST. However, to get the above price, materials must be delivered, in the appropriate quantity, to 32 postal stations. Distribution takes approximately four days from the time the postal station receives the material. Postal workers can deliver right into apartment building mailboxes. To distribute to 900,000 households would cost approximately \$66,000.00.

It must be emphasized that due to the timeframe needed for Council approval, printing and distribution, the pamphlet would not be distributed to residents until after January 1, 2000.

With respect to the request to consider disseminating the information through the media rather than by pamphlet, “through the media” can mean two things – via advertising or through reporting by journalists. Each of these possibilities is discussed below.

Paid advertising is an important part of the communications mix for many public education campaigns. It has the advantage of stating information exactly as the proponent wants but it is expensive. Another disadvantage is that, particularly when using the dailies, the information is here today, gone tomorrow. Even if cut out and kept, it soon yellows and disintegrates. For these reasons, and because of the amount of information that needs to be conveyed about emergency preparedness, advertising is not a good choice for this campaign.

Media relations, (reporting by journalists) is unquestionably an extremely important conduit for getting information to the public. On the plus side, media coverage is very inexpensive and very

visible. However, it is as fleeting as advertising. And there are further serious limitations to how effective the media can be.

- **Selectivity** - The media cannot be expected to cover something simply because the City of Toronto feels it is important. Each reporter, media outlet, editor, etc., uses different criteria to determine whether or not something is worthwhile to their readers/listeners. If they do not consider it newsworthy, they will not use it. If it does not fit their medium, they will not use it. (For example, if it does not have strong visuals, television will not cover it.) If the issue is not timely, or too complicated, they will not use it.
- **Message** - There is no guarantee that the media will cover a story from the angle that the City of Toronto wants it covered or that they will reiterate the messages that we would like. In fact, the story could be slanted in a completely different way. This could result in substantial omissions or significant misinformation in the messages going out to the public.
- **Timing** - If the information is released on a certain day and a significant story breaks on the same day, the story may not be used or it may be buried somewhere where it receives little exposure. We have no control over when, or if, a media outlet decides to run the information.

We recommend using the media to help us get information to our residents; however, for the above reasons, it is unwise to leave the dissemination of an important message solely to the media.

There are a number of informal distribution channels, in addition to fire and police stations that will be used to get the personal emergency preparedness information out to residents at little or no cost. Fire Services has added this information to its web site, which is accessed through the City's main web site. Fire services public education staff are also incorporating emergency preparedness information into the standard fire safety presentations that they make to the public. In addition, pamphlets will be distributed at displays, which are at venues around the City; information officers will distribute them at presentations and tours; they will be available at Civic Centres; given to the media; and distributed at special events. We would also make the information available to Councillors and provide pamphlets to community groups for their distribution.

Conclusions:

There are a number of options available to educate the public about steps they can take in regard to various emergency situations. These options vary in the number of citizens they reach, in timing and in cost. If the City wants to reach all households, then the option using a pamphlet delivered by Canada Post should be selected. If the City does not need to reach all households, then the option of a pamphlet inserted into Toronto Hydro bills should be chosen. Media relations is recommended as one of the activities that the City should undertake but the media should not be the sole or primary vehicle for information dissemination.

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Councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski, High Park, appeared before the Policy and Finance Committee in connection with the foregoing matter.

(City Council on December 14, 15 and 16, 1999, had before it, during consideration of the foregoing Clause, the following report (December 9, 1999) from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services:

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide information on options for educating the public on personal emergency preparedness using existing City publications.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

The cost of including personal emergency preparedness information in existing, widely-distributed City of Toronto publications, such as the Parks and Recreation booklet, would be approximately \$6,000. The required funding will be included in the 2000 Operating Budget request.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that in addition to distributing personal emergency preparedness information in Toronto Hydro bills (as recommended by the Policy and Finance Committee on December 7, 1999), the Parks and Recreation booklet be used to distribute information at a cost of approximately \$6,000.

Background:

The Community Services Committee on December 1, 1999, in considering the report entitled “Public Education on Personal Emergency Preparedness” requested the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services to report directly to Council for its meeting on December 14, 1999, on the “feasibility of including the emergency preparedness information in existing publications such as Waste Watch, the Parks and Recreation brochure, Councillors’ Newsletters, etc.”

Comments:

*Works and Emergency Services communications staff have prepared a synopsis of the 24-page booklet entitled *Be Prepared, Not Scared: Emergency Preparedness Starts With You*, written by Emergency Preparedness Canada and the Canadian Red Cross, and turned it into a pamphlet. We have recommended distributing the pamphlet to residents in the city in January using either Canada Post or Toronto Hydro bills. The Canada Post distribution would reach all households (900,000) whereas the Toronto Hydro bills would reach only 650,000 households.*

To emphasize to residents that personal emergency preparedness is a year-round activity, we will continue throughout the year to disseminate the information via other means as well. We will distribute it through the media; fire and police stations; Access Toronto; the city’s web site; at displays, presentations and tours; at Civic Centres and special events; through Councillors and their newsletters and through community groups.

In addition, there are some City of Toronto publications that are distributed widely across the city. An informal survey of communications staff from other departments suggests that Waste Watch and the Parks and Recreation booklet are the city publications that would be most suitable for including emergency preparedness information.

Waste Watch is a semi-annual tabloid-sized newsletter from the Solid Waste Management Services Division of Works and Emergency Services. It is distributed to all houses and apartments in the city twice a year – in March and October. The additional cost to add the emergency preparedness pamphlet to one of the newsletter distributions would be approximately \$25,000 for printing and \$4,815 for distribution (including GST). We do not recommend incorporating the emergency preparedness information into the text of the newsletter because it is long and would displace necessary recycling or garbage information. In addition, the newsletter is printed on newsprint which is not meant to be kept for long periods of time and would deteriorate. The total cost to include the information would be approximately \$29,815.

The Parks and Recreation Division of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism produces a 100 plus-page booklet twice per year – in March and August – detailing the City’s recreation programs. It is meant to be kept by city residents for as long as four to five months. The booklet is distributed door-to-door to houses and apartments through a distribution company. The Division charges approximately \$2,000 per page to include information in one edition of its booklet. The emergency preparedness information would cover two to three pages. The total cost to include the information would be approximately \$6,000.

With respect to Councillors’ newsletters, the emergency preparedness information may be too long (over 1,000 words) to be contained in a single newsletter’s text. With a councillor’s

agreement, the information could possibly be broken up to appear over several issues or the pamphlet could be delivered with a newsletter.

The downside to using any of these publications for personal emergency preparedness information is that residents will not be looking for it, it will not mesh with the subject matter with which it is delivered and it will not be as visible as if it were delivered as a stand-alone piece. However, particularly if the Toronto Hydro billing option is selected as the primary method, these would provide a useful, secondary method to get information to residents. We will investigate other possibilities for distributing information and report back as required.

Conclusions:

In addition to disseminating personal emergency preparedness information directly to residents through Canada Post or Toronto Hydro, existing City publications could be used. The most cost-effective of these would be the Parks and Recreation booklet at cost of approximately \$6,000.

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