

# Wireless service providers should participate in National Public Alerting System

Regional council passes resolution to provide feedback to CRTC

by Julia Le  
Oakville Beaver Staff

Halton Regional council believes wireless service providers should participate in Canada's National Public Alerting System.

Council passed a resolution to provide feedback to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) as it looks for public input on the role the wireless industry can play in make the alerting system even more effective.

"Over 80 per cent of Canadians own a mobile device and 66 per cent own a smart-phone," the CRTC stated in a press release.

"Given the broad ownership of wireless devices by the Canadian public, the wireless industry's participation in the alerting

system could further enhance its effectiveness in safeguarding and warning Canadians about potential emergencies and natural disasters."

"Mobile alerts could be an effective way to alert citizens in such a situation," the CRTC continued.

Wireless public alerting has already been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions, such as the United States and Australia.

Emergency alerts are issued by emergency officials, such as police officers, fire marshalls and public health personnel. They could be issued to warn Canadians about tornadoes, forest fires, floods and water contamination.

Halton Region CAO Jane MacCaskill told council access to cellular phone numbers would allow the Region to be more effective in communicating with residents during an emergency.

“The effectiveness of our community response system is going to degrade overtime as people move to the cellular.”

Jane MacCaskill  
Halton Region CAO

She noted that increasingly, households are moving towards cellular device use only in their homes and in the Region's database, it only has a list of landline phones recorded.

"The effectiveness of our community response system is going to degrade overtime as people move to the cellular," she said.

Staff believes making wireless service providers participation mandatory in the National Public Alerting System will enhance the Region's reach to the public in an emergency situation, MacCaskill said.

Regional staff passed the council resolution on to the CRTC before a May 30 deadline and prepared a submission on implementation, technical standards, mon-

itoring, compliance and testing in regard to participation of wireless service providers in the public alerting system.

The submission also supported municipal access to a wireless public alerting system, to allow emergency notifications to cell phones from Halton's Enhanced Community Notification Service, which allows emergency personnel like Halton police and firefighters to send information to as many residents as possible in case of an emergency.

MacCaskill boasted that Halton has been a leader in promoting the use of the emergency 9-1-1 database for emergency response purposes.

"We were the first Canadian municipality to use the civic addresses in the 9-1-1 database for the purposes of emergency community response and that was as a result of advocacy that council did in getting the CRTC to approve the use of the database for this purpose," she said.

"And we have successfully used this system during both the Burlington flood and ice storm events and continue to test and evolve the use of that system."

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