

10.1.9



PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Halifax Regional Council
July 5, 2005

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan English", written over a horizontal line.

Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 05, 2005

SUBJECT: Emergency Broadcast System- Memorandum of Understanding

ORIGIN:

At a meeting of Halifax Regional Council meeting of September 14, 2004, a motion was approved requesting:

a) Staff be authorized to develop a memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between HRM and InfoRadio Canada 97.9 FM, operators of a specialized community information radio station 97.9 FM, with a view to establishing a partnership with HRM to provide Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) during times of public emergency or disaster.

B) EMO staff be authorized to approach the Nova Scotia and Federal Governments for cost-sharing on this project, through the federal Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP). If approved, this cost-sharing arrangement would substantially reduce HRM's direct costs outlay, as indicated in the Budget Implications section of this report.

InfoRadio Canada has now completed an engineering report regarding enhancing its service and coverage signal and is now prepared to seek necessary approvals from the Canada Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). The proposed MOU between HRM and 97.9 FM would certainly support those efforts and could help expedite that process.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- 1) Council approve the Memorandum of Understanding attached to this report.

BACKGROUND

The municipality's Emergency Measures Organization was approached in 2004 by InfoRadio Canada, operators of a community information radio station 97.9 FM, with a view to establishing a partnership with HRM to provide an Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) during times of public emergency or disaster. The community information station was particularly helpful to HRM in its efforts to keep citizens constantly informed about the status of recovery efforts associated with a number of recent public emergencies, in particular Hurricane Juan and the Blizzard of 2004, sometimes referred to as White Juan. It was felt by both parties following those events it would be prudent to formalize that working relationship in an MOU.

DISCUSSION:

- (A) During large scale emergency events, accurate, concise and timely information needs to be provided to the public. In this light, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between the HRM-E.M.O. and 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio has been developed. The agreement allows for the sharing of resources of both agencies, both human and material, to enhance the timeliness of Public Information. This MOU allows for direct access to the station's programming facility to allow E.M.O. officials to pre-empt existing broadcasting and replace it with an emergency broadcast. The MOU further establishes operational protocols for each agency to follow during a large scale emergency event. As part of the M.O.U., 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio will apply to the CRTC to increase its signal strength, allowing large penetration within the municipality.
- (B) At present, there is no federal Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) monies available for this fiscal year, but the M.O.U. will allow for JEPP funding in future years to be used to enhance computer software and hardware that will improve the connectivity between the station's programming facility and the H.R.M. emergency response group.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There will be no budget implications with this M.O.U. until approval is granted for federal cost sharing monies under the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

Maintain the status quo. However, staff believes HRM might run the risk of 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio establishing protocols with other governments or agencies that could interfere with HRM's current priority status in direct-access emergency broadcasting.

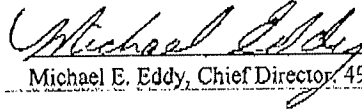
ATTACHMENTS

Memorandum of Understanding between H.R.M.-EMO and 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Barry Manucl, Coordinator, EMO, John O'Brien, Corporate Communications Officer]

Report Approved by:



Michael E. Eddy, Chief Director, 490-4238



Memorandum of Understanding

between

**Halifax Regional Municipality
Emergency Measures Organization**

and

97.9 FM Halifax (HRM) Information Radio

Respecting

Emergency Public Alerting Within HRM

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Halifax Regional Municipality's Emergency Measures Organization (HRM-EMO) and Halifax Information Radio have specific roles to play when emergency or disaster situation occur within the municipality. Both organizations have telecommunications resources, material and human, that are used to provide a coordinated public response to emergencies or disasters. In general, when both parties are fully committed in responding to a particular emergency, they are likely to require all available telecommunications resources at their disposal.
- 1.2 This document constitutes an agreement between the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio, a federally-incorporated company operating an FM commercial broadcasting station, known as Halifax Information Radio. (The Parties).
- 1.3 Nothing in this agreement precludes either party from exercising its prerogative to retain control of its own telecommunications resources, based on an assessment of its required needs at the time a request is made by the other party.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

- 2.1 The principals of 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio have offered to make their station available to HRM emergency response 24- hours a day during any declared public emergency, or any other HRM-EMO coordinated response. They have offered to remove any unrelated program features, and all commercial content, to make all program time available for the broadcast of important public emergency messages to listeners in the HRM. As a result, HRM and 97.9 FM will commit to improved software and hardware technology to create a low-cost, fail-safe emergency broadcast system that will provide an uninterrupted flow of emergency messaging-- easily updated by authorized users from any location by HRM, Such a system could serve as a model for emergency broadcasting not only in Nova Scotia, but in any community across Canada.
- 2.2 The emergency crises created by Hurricane Juan (September 2003) and the Winter Blizzard (February 2004) led to the discovery of a major communications requirement within the HRM, as well as the means to cope with it. HRM was virtually shut down and many residents were left without electricity; therefore, having to rely on battery powered-radios to hear vital information affecting public safety. During both environmental events, Halifax Information Radio provided current directives from EMO leaders on a 15- minute repeating "program loop" and updated the information 24 hours a day. The municipality was able to provide a description of its emergency response. Instructions to assist in clean-up efforts and reassurances to people who otherwise would have been in the dark both figuratively and literally.

During Juan, the FM station's production facilities were without power for a time, but because the program content was stored in a computer located at the power-protected CBC

transmitter site on Geiser's Hill in Halifax, the station remained on the air throughout the emergency. The operators relocated to the EMO Emergency Operations Centre in the Spicer Building, in Dartmouth, which is also power-protected. With limited production capacity HRM and 97.9 FM managed to update emergency messages regularly on a computer, and sent them through a telephone internet connection to the transmitter. Throughout both emergency events, the signal and its messages were reliable and widely received within the community, because it was the only continuous source of emergency information to the residents of HRM.

The station has since been widely recognized among political and business community leaders and residents of the municipality as an appropriate, reliable source of essential information in a public emergency.

3 **DEFINITIONS / ACRONYMS**

- 3.1 In this Memorandum of Understanding, unless the context dictates otherwise, the following definitions apply:

CRTC - Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission

Direct to air A message designated for direct broadcast as soon as it reaches the 97.9 FM computer. It is then sent immediately to the transmitter for broadcast. The message does not sit in a queue to be broadcast at a later time.

HRM Telecommunications Centre - means the area adjacent to the HRM - EOC which is designated as a telecommunications centre

4 **ARRANGEMENTS - 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio**

- 4.1 HRM and 97.9 FM will work together to ensure the station's production facilities will be protected against power and/or telephone outages during an emergency so the station will be available for emergency messaging.
- 4.2 Proprietary .NET software (client server architecture) will be developed through a joint HRM-97.9 FM effort to permit password-protected voice access to the station by HRM-EMO personnel from any computer equipped with telephone, cable or wireless Internet access. Both parties will collaborate to establish the degree of software access for authorized personnel. The parties will collaborate to establish an Emergency Program Line-up.
- 4.3 97.9 FM will apply to Industry Canada and the CRTC for permission to increase the signal strength to guarantee adequate reception throughout the entire municipality.

4.4 Although EMO personnel will control some program content during an Emergency, 97.9 FM, as a private broadcast licensee, will pledge in writing to accept full responsibility for Emergency Broadcast content.

4.5 97.9 FM will provide training of HRM personnel in the emergency operation features of the system. The initial training will include E.M.O. staff, EMO Operations Officers, EMO. Duty Officers and HRM Emergency Public Information Officers (PIO)

5 **ARRANGEMENTS - H.R.M. E.M.O.**

5.1 Portable and wireless computer hardware will be provided by the HRM to permit the delivery of voice messaging and the management of the programming line-up. This will include wireless Internet air cards.

5.2 The municipality will maintain a list of authorized and trained staff who are capable of accessing the system for the purposes initiating an emergency broadcast.

5.3 HRM and 97.9 FM will explore Federal and Provincial government program opportunities to help finance the purchase of the required software as described in this MOU.

5.4 HRM will provide access to emergency operation centers during a public emergency to 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio personnel.

6.0 **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The parties agree to return any equipment made available under this arrangement promptly upon request or immediately after a particular situation is concluded.

6.2 The parties agree to return equipment in good working order and, if such equipment is damaged or lost, to pay for any damages or pay for the replacement of equipment.

6.3 Each party assumes responsibility for any expenses incurred as a result of use of equipment by the other party

7.0 **COOPERATION IN JOINT EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

7.1 Each party shall maintain and share an emergency contact list for key operational staff which will allow mutual notification of an actual or impending emergency. The HRM. list will contain the day-time and night-time contact information for its EMO Operations and Duty Officers

- 7.2 Upon notification of an actual or impending emergency, staff from 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio will determine the station's availability and capacity, and will advise the HRM's EMO accordingly. Staff from 97.9 FM will remain on active or passive stand-by until advised by HRM's EMO to stand-down.
- 7.3 All broadcasts made from 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio during an emergency response will be logged on an appropriate form (Broadcast Log) showing date, time, originator and content of the message.
- 7.4 During declared emergency (State of Local Emergency), broadcast logs will be sent to the HRM EOC on a regular basis as determined by the EMO Operations Officer. For lesser emergency events, broadcast logs will be sent to the EMO Coordinator at the end of the emergency.
- 7.5 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio will keep a copy of all EMO broadcast logs for a length of time to be consistent with the HRM Records Management System.
- 7.6 In the event of a telephone or other telephony failure, including the Internet, HRM EMO will take measures to ensure continuity of information flow to 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio. These measures may include the use of EMO UHF radios, runners or other such means.
- 7.7 At the conclusion of an emergency event, 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio will complete a report to the EMO containing a summary of information shared and broadcasts made. For a declared emergency, 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio will be involved as appropriate in the after-action debriefing process.

8.0 **AMENDMENT**

- 8.1 This MOU may be amended at any time by mutual consent of both parties.

9.0 **DURATION, WITHDRAWAL AND TERMINATION**

- 9.1 This MOU will remain in effect until one party advises the other, or both mutually agree, in writing, 30 days prior to the actual date of termination.

10 **EFFECTIVE DATE AND SIGNATURE**

- 10.1 This agreement comes into effect on the date signed by the representative(s) of each organization.

10.2 Administration of this MOU is the responsibility of (1) HRM- EMO Co-ordinator and (2) the President of 97.9 FM Halifax Information Radio.

10.3 This agreement entered into on the _____ day of _____, 2005 in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

97.9 FM HALIFAX INFORMATION RADIO

Barry Manuel
HRM-EMO, Coordinator
Halifax Regional Municipality

Jack McGaw
President