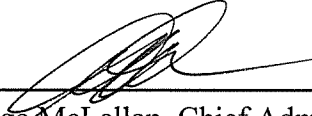


10.1.10

**Halifax Regional Council**  
**May 24, 2005**

**TO:** Mayor Peter Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** May 18, 2005

**SUBJECT:** All Channel Alerting - Letter of Support

**ORIGIN**

At the April 5, 2005, regular meeting of the Halifax Regional Council correspondence was received regarding an All Channel Alert Proposal - from Pelmorex Communications dated March 7, 2005.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council send a letter of support to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) supporting the application from Pelmorex Communications Inc. for the development and implementation of an ALL CHANNEL ALERTING system.

## **BACKGROUND**

Quick and efficient notification of all or selected sectors of our populace is a critical step in the response to an existing or emerging emergency event. The use of public broadcast media to perform this step is a methodology that has strong appeal to emergency response agencies across the county. At present, Canada does not have a national all-channel early warning broadcast system. Essentially the Pelmorex All Channel Alerting (ACA) system would allow a warning message to be placed across the screens of cable and satellite subscribers in a wide or small geographical area regardless of which television channel the user is viewing. This message could be locally written and could include a weather warning, an evacuation order or the locations of emergency shelters, etc. The advantage of this type of "early warning" to our citizens is tremendous. For example if there is an evacuation occurring in a portion of the H.R.M., one could broadcast escape routes, or the phone number for the Public Information Office, or other life-critical information.

## **DISCUSSION**

Pelmorex Communications Inc., a Canadian company that owns the Canadian Weather Network channel, has made an application to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to provide such a service to be made available to all cable and satellite subscribers. There is a cost for the development of this system that will be passed on to cable and satellite subscribers as part of their monthly bill. However, in an emergency, the municipality and/or province would have the ability to use this service as one tool of several to notify the public of an impending or occurring danger of any nature. Pelmorex had made a similar application to the CRTC in 2002, which was denied. The company has since re-written its proposal to correct the short-comings noted in the 2002 application. H.R.M. supported the original proposal in 2002.

H.R.M. has testified before **The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence**. This committee is so strongly in support of a national public alerting system that it believes that legislation should be put in place to compel broadcasters to interrupt all broadcasts when lives are threatened by a major emergency and a message needs to be sent (*National Emergencies: Canada's Fragile Front Lines, page 52*). The Committee has made this part of a recommendation. The use of an All Channel Alerting system also compliments H.R.M. emergency management plans and procedures currently in place.

## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

None.

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**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

None

**ALTERNATIVES**

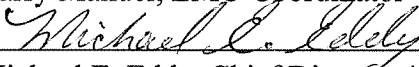
- Council can decline to send a letter of support.

**ATTACHMENTS** - None.

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 Manuel, EMO Coordinator 490-5400

Report Approved by:

  
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Michael E. Eddy, Chief Director 490-4238