

**Agenda – Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks –  
December 2, 2016**

**REPORTS**

**Item No. 3                      Promotion of Keyed Lock Box Program**

**WINNIPEG PUBLIC SERVICE RECOMMENDATION:**

That this report be received as information.

**Agenda – Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks –  
December 2, 2016**

**DECISION MAKING HISTORY:**

**STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

On September 19, 2016, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks forwarded the recommendation of the Riel Community Committee to the Winnipeg Public Service for report back in 90 days.

**COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

On July 4, 2016, the Riel Community Committee passed the following motion:

WHEREAS the City of Winnipeg has a voluntary keyed lock box program for emergency services to access apartment, condominium, commercial and other multi-unit buildings;

AND WHEREAS this program is currently voluntary on the part of property owners;

AND WHEREAS though this program has been taken up by over 1500 residential and commercial properties, there are still a significant number of properties that do not participate;

AND WHEREAS key or code access to residential or commercial units is safe and secure;

AND WHEREAS research has shown that minutes or seconds can make the difference between life, death, and serious injury for people in the midst of a medical emergency in particular in the case of cardiac events;

AND WHEREAS first responders have been faced with the choice of whether to smash windows or break down doors, causing both delays in responding as well as property damage;

AND WHEREAS all citizens deserve to have comparable response times in the event of an emergency;

AND WHEREAS some Winnipeg citizens and first responders have reported unnecessary delays and stress during medical or other emergencies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Riel Community Committee recommend to the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks that the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back on ways in which the lockbox program could be implemented more widely across Winnipeg; including measures to promote participation like advertising, public education, incentives, or making the program mandatory.

## ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

**Title:** Keyed Lock Box Program - Opportunities for Expansion

**Critical Path:** Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks

### AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
M. Reshaur	J. Lane	N/A	D. McNeil

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information regarding strategies for the potential expansion of the Lock Box Program and identifies related issues that require resolution prior to program expansion.

The Fire Paramedic Service currently administers a city wide Keyed Lock Box Program, the goal of which is to ensure timely access to a building and the fire and life safety infrastructure within it. Participation by property owners is voluntary. There are currently 1546 properties enrolled in the program. The size and current rate of expansion of the program are manageable with existing resources.

Investigating the issue of expansion of the Keyed Lock Box Program has revealed the need to consider how the program is structured and new technology available. These issues have to be addressed prior to any expansion of the program. The issues include:

- **Technology:** New options are available offering greater security and accountability. All will have associated costs for the WFPS and property owners.
- **Liability:** Liability issues pertaining to the lock box program have been identified in the past. Any changes to the program will need to incorporate measures to reduce potential liability for the City of Winnipeg.
- **Capacity:** The WFPS has to determine how many participating properties can be managed with the existing resources.
- **Mandatory inclusion:** Criteria have to be developed to determine which property types warrant mandatory inclusion. Impact of mandatory participation of some property types may overwhelm the existing resources. WFPS currently does not have authority to mandate participation in the program in the absence of a by-law amendment.
- **Properties targeted for inclusion on a voluntary basis:** The WFPS has informed property owners of the benefits of participation in the program on a case by case basis. Occupancy types targeted for voluntary participation would have to be evaluated and prioritized.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report be received as information.

## REASON FOR THE REPORT

At its September 19, 2016 meeting, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks forwarded the recommendation of the Riel Community Committee to the Winnipeg Public Service for report back in 90 days, namely:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service for report back on ways in which the lockbox program could be implemented more widely across Winnipeg; including measures to promote participation like advertising, public education, incentives, or making the program mandatory.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications resulting from receiving this report as information.

## HISTORY

The Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service, Fire Prevention Branch established the Keyed Lock Box program in 1979. The goal of the Lock Box program is to ensure timely access to a building and the fire and life safety infrastructure within it. Lock box programs are of mutual benefit to both the property owner and the Fire Paramedic Service. Lock boxes:

- Provide faster access to a fire.
- Provide faster access to the sick or injured.
- Limit avoidable damage to property caused by forced entry.
- Provide prompt access to the controls for fire and life safety systems and building infrastructure.

Participating properties install an approved lock box and place within it keys and /or electronic fobs required to gain access to designated areas within the building. The Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service is the holder of the lock box keys. Even the building owner cannot open the box. All lock boxes in the city are openable by the same key carried on Fire and Paramedic apparatus only. The only other entity with access to the lock boxes is Noble Locksmith Ltd. They currently have sole distribution rights for Medeco Lock boxes within Winnipeg.

The lock box program specifies which building keys should and should not be installed in a lock box. The keys that should be included in the lock box are for the primary building fire and life safety systems, egress and utilities. Keys that are not to be placed within the lock box are master building keys and keys to individual suites.

Property owners are specifically instructed not to place a master key in the lock box. The City of Winnipeg Legal Services Department has deemed the potential liability exposure to be too great. If a master key were to be lost by WFPS personnel it may necessitate the re-keying of the entire building at considerable expense.

Individual suite keys are excluded to limit the number of keys in a lock box and to limit liability.

Cost of the lock box, installation and provision of building keys are all the responsibility of the property owner.

## **Legal Liability**

Concerns regarding the City of Winnipeg's exposure to liability in the event a lock box key were lost by a City of Winnipeg employee and subsequently used to facilitate criminal activity have been raised throughout the history of the lock box program. The City could also be liable for the costs of re-keying locks even if no criminal activity took place.

The WFPS has concluded that the program creates an inherent liability on the part of the City and that the lock box keys must be handled with a very high standard of diligence.

Lock box keys and the contents of lock boxes have been lost by fire fighters and not recovered in the past. An ongoing accounting of these incidents has not been maintained. They occur very infrequently.

Any expansion of the keyed Lock Box program comes with a proportional increase in exposure to legal liability resulting from potential misuse or loss of a lock box key or the building keys stored within the lock box.

## **Current Marketing of the Program**

The keyed lock box program is described in detail on the WFPS portion of the City of Winnipeg web site in the *Regulations, Permits and General Information* section. A pdf format information pamphlet is also available to download. The program is not actively marketed. No program expansion goals have been considered or set.

Property owners first find out about the program one of five ways:

1. They are advised by a Fire Inspector who identifies a property that would benefit from participation in the program and raises the issue during the course of his or her duties.
2. They are advised by a Fire Crew attending an alarm at their property.
3. They are advised as part of a presentation made by a WFD Public Education Officer.
4. They see the lock box information on the WFPS web site.
5. Word of mouth among property owners and the various industry groups.

Lock box programs are utilized by cities throughout North America. Some are voluntary; some are mandatory and some a combination of both. Participation in the City of Winnipeg program is solely voluntary.

## **Program Expansion Options**

Ideally all buildings within the City would offer quick unencumbered access to emergency responders. Broad expansion of the program would be a move in that direction. However there are a number of implications of program expansion that have to be weighed against the benefits. Program expansion options include:

1. **Maintain the status quo.** The keyed lock box program enrolls approximately 75 properties per year. Property owners will continue to be referred to the program by Fire Inspectors, Public Education Officers and Fire Crews as the need is identified. The program would remain voluntary.

The primary advantage of maintaining the status quo is that no additional financial and resource commitment would be required on the part of the City. The program scope remains manageable with current resources.

The primary disadvantage is that properties where participation would be of particular benefit to the WFPS or residents may choose not to enroll in the program.

2. **Make the program mandatory for occupancies where the provision of lock box accessible keys is deemed to be of particular importance.** The program would be mixed mandatory / voluntary participation. Making participation of selected property types mandatory ensures enrollment of those occupancies that could benefit most from the program. Their participation would be enforceable.

Expansion by property type would have to be carefully managed. It has the potential to enroll thousands of additional properties, straining available resources beyond their capacity to administer the program.

The FPS does not have the legislative authority to mandate participation in the Keyed Lock Box program. Mandating the participation of some occupancy types will require an amendment of the Fire Prevention By-Law or other relevant by-law.

Mandatory participation may sharply increase the volume of complaints and enquiries, creating an additional administrative burden.

3. **Market the program to select occupancy types.** This option entails Fire Prevention creating a list of priority occupancy types for inclusion in the lock box program. Marketing of the program would then be targeted to the highest priority occupancies utilizing marketing mediums best suited to the particular occupancy. Program participation would continue to be on a voluntary basis.

Marketing can be targeted to specific types of properties that represent a greater hazard to occupants or fire fighters.

4. **Market the program broadly utilizing popular media.** This option entails the Fire Paramedic Service advertising the program to the public in the hope that buildings of all types will be enrolled in the program.

While this option fully capitalizes on the advantages of the program, it comes with significant disadvantages. There may be a sharp increase in enrollment, resulting in resource demands beyond the WFPS capacity. Broad enrollment does not guarantee that the buildings with greatest potential benefit will enroll. Broad enrollment could result in WFPS Resources being diverted from the buildings with the most to gain from enrollment.

Fire Prevention has not received any requests to include an entire building category or occupancy type in the keyed Lock Box Program. Requests from operational fire fighters regarding the program have been to include a specific property due to circumstances encountered while responding it.

## **Impact of New Technology**

Lock boxes are no longer solely reliant on keys. Other technology is available that offers greater security against lost or stolen lock box access keys and greater accountability by the user. The need to consider new lock box technology available has been identified by the WFPS as a planning priority. Lock Box program expansion prior to a decision regarding a technology update may leave property owners exposed to the potential for costly equipment updates down the road. The WFPS may also choose to limit the application of the new technology to properties enrolled in the program after the decision to upgrade has been made.

Updating the lock box program to utilize more current technology will have associated costs for both the property owners participating in the program and the WFPS. Because a decision on this issue has yet to be made it is not possible to estimate the cost to the City at this time.

## **Plan for the Future**

Review of the Lock Box program concludes that limited expansion of the lock box program utilizing only the existing resources currently available is possible.

A combined mandatory / voluntary participation model offers the greatest flexibility to respond to the needs of the citizens of Winnipeg by expanding the program to include properties identified as benefitting the occupants and surrounding community the greatest for mandatory participation.

A priority list of occupancies to focus voluntary enrollment efforts is required. These occupancies can be focused on one at a time by bringing available resources to bear on the increased voluntary enrollment. A slow measured approach that implements expansion in a systematic manner would allow for monitoring of the program resource demands and the effectiveness of each measure implemented.

Any attempt to significantly expand the keyed lock box program will have to be accompanied by a commitment to provide the resources necessary to administer the program. The current program requires resources from throughout the WFPS including clerical for program administration, dispatch for entry into the Computer Aided Dispatch System, Fire Inspectors to advise and assist property owners and on duty fire operations staff to open the box periodically so the owner can replace the keys. Any increase in enrollment will result in a corresponding increase in demand for these resources.

Keyed Lock box programs are an attractive option for emergency services personnel wanting to gain timely access to a building in the event of an emergency. The benefit of the program has to be weighed against the significant legal liability and resources required of the City administering the program.

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

**Financial Impact Statement**   **Date:**   November 4, 2016

**Project Name:**

**Keyed Lock Box Program - Opportunities for Expansion**

**COMMENTS:**

There is no financial impact associated with this report as it is for information only.

*Original signed by*  
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John Hall, ACMA, CGMA  
Controller



## CONSULTATION

### In preparing this report there was consultation with:

MEDECO, Noble Lock Smith Ltd., 249 Notre Dame Ave., Winnipeg, Mb., R3B 3C9. Phone: 204 942-3703

Knox Company, 1601 W. Deer Valley Road ,Phoenix, AZ 85027 US. Phone: 800-552-5669

Supra, United Technologies, 4001 Fairview Industrial Dr. SE, Salem ,OR, 97302 USA. Phone: 800 547-0252

Noble Locksmith Ltd., 249 Notre Dame Ave., Winnipeg, Mb., R3B 3C9, (204) 942-3703

City of Winnipeg, Legal Services (as to legal issues)

## OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

**01-2a Collaborate to Make Safe Communities, Direction 3 - Promote Safety in Buildings.** The keyed lock box program enhances safety in participating occupancies by facilitating unencumbered access to the building and avoiding damage related to forced entry.

**01-2b Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery, Direction 1- Provide Emergency Fire/ Rescue and Pre-Hospital Paramedical Response.** The keyed lock box program helps improve community safety by offering faster access to occupancies that present obstacles to timely entry.

## SUBMITTED BY

Department: Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service  
Division: Fire Prevention and Public Education  
Prepared by: Assistant Chief Mark Reshaur  
Date: November 4, 2016  
File No.