

Halifax Regional Municipality moves to e-ticketing

At the end of August 2005, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) took another step towards improving its revenue stream, with a further enhancement to its parking ticket system. Eleven HRM parking enforcement commissionaires hit the streets equipped with hand-held electronic ticket issuers designed to work seamlessly with HRM's Parking Ticket Management System, in place since amalgamation in 1996. Citizens can pay their tickets online through this system. (www.halifax.ca/revenue/genrev/tickets_notice.html)

Prior to the introduction of the new equipment, the parking commissionaires would hand-write the tickets and leave one copy on the vehicle. The information on the remaining copies would be then be input into the region's system, again by hand further increasing the potential for errors. A scan of the handwritten ticket would also be taken for presentation in court. Roughly 18 percent of the tickets handled in this manner were rejected as evidence by the court, due to errors or illegibility. The commissionaires will now enter the violation information on the new hand-held equipment and print the ticket on the spot, leaving a copy on the vehicle. The information in the hand-held is loaded daily directly into the Parking Ticket Management System with no further human intervention, reducing the potential for error.

As a result of the new e-ticketing process, which required a tender valued at \$98,000, HRM anticipates an 18 percent increase in fine collection equivalent to the percentage of tickets formerly being rejected. To put that in perspective, the City of Ottawa, recently announced that it had collected \$1 million just from a 16 percent take-up rate on its new online payment system.

When asked how HRM made the move to the new hand-helds, Catherine Sanderson, manager of Revenue at HRM, said that, "A previous manager who went to a convention discovered the technology." She explained that HRM then proceeded to prepare a business case for the procurement based on the ticket process at the time, the ticket rejection rate, and the anticipated improvement in fine collection. Nova Scotia's Department of Justice and Nova Scotia Provincial Courts were consulted for their recommendations on the format, which was eventually approved.

Kim Fader, the project lead, described the procurement/tendering process saying that they used a "two-envelop" system where the functional qualities of the bid is evaluated and scored separately from the price. The scores of each are totalled to give the final score for each bid. For this tender they had five qualified bidders, four Canadian and one American. The winning bid was EDC Corporation from Syracuse, NY. Under the terms of the contract, EDC provided 15 hand-helds, 15 mobile printers, a year's supply of tickets, training, software and integration of the software into HRM's parking management system.

As they do their foot patrols, the parking commissionaires carry – in a holster attached to their belt – the hand-held ticket issuers and the printer, which together weigh under five

pounds. It took about two and half hours to train the commissionaires in the use of the new equipment. According to Fader, things are going “quite well.” The commissionaires seem to have adapted quickly to the change and are issuing roughly the same number of tickets as before. The ultimate test on whether the e-tickets reduce the number rejected at court should occur in November, as a summons cannot be issued until 61 days after the issuance of the ticket. *—Anne Phillips*