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To: Mayor & Council

Oct 30th 2025

City of Prince George, B.C.

For Council meeting dated for Nov 3rd. 2025

Re: Agenda Item E8 [Proposed Amendment to Security Alarm System Bylaw No. 6358, 1995](#)

As a public member of the Mayor's committee for Public Safety, I am asking you to reconsider this agenda item for discussion and debate. The issue at hand is this bylaw, as it stands, has no venue or means for appealing a fine issued under it. All bylaws come with some form of appeal process that is clearly stated in the bylaw it's self, as it's written. Bylaws to be enforceable must have a means of being appealed due to situations or circumstances that are not considered under the bylaw. Bylaws must be clear and in plain language, so that anyone reading them clearly understands its intent and its purpose for application.

While we all understand the reasoning behind this bylaw, to recover or at the least offset the expense of responding to "false alarms" be those fire alarms or burglary alarms. Every other municipality has some form of "appeal process" attached to their respective "alarm bylaw". Prince George did, in its original bylaw have an avenue for false alarm forgiveness, for a single false alarm generated in one calendar year per civic address.

We must remember we are all human and we all make mistakes from time to time, it would take nothing for a senior, who is delayed in disarming their alarm system from generating a false alarm, rearming and leaving without thinking anything more of it. That could be seen as a false alarm depending on how the monitoring station addresses the signals received. The alarm industry has come a long way in addressing community concerns about false alarms as they are the service provider of contact, to the RCMP in Prince George.

We all rely on speedy response from the RCMP for all calls they receive, we understand the load that false alarms can create during high call volume events, storms and other related calls. However we also see the importance of properly maintained and monitored alarm systems to ensuring a higher level of protection for businesses and neighborhoods where alarms are commonly deployed. Insurance companies know the value of alarm systems that's why they offer a reduction in insurance policies for having a monitored alarm system.

A situation occurred where an alarm system was triggered in a new business that had just opened, the system was “new” to the business owner and put in to replace an older system that was no longer functional. During renovations the alarm system was disabled and partly removed rendering the old system inoperative. At some point near the end of the renovations the premise was broken into and several hundred dollars’ worth of equipment and product was stolen. This break and enter was discovered the next day by the contractor and business owner and reported to the RCMP.

The business owner contacted another local alarm company who came in and replaced the alarm system and configured it for monitoring. 30 days after the installation of the alarm a single alarm was generated, the monitoring station, following false alarm protocols, contacted the owner and advised that a single alarm was generated and that the “police were not contacted” as there was only a single zone detected. This is a common protocol to reduce false alarm calls to police in almost every jurisdiction.

The business owner chose to call the police themselves and advise them that an alarm had been triggered at their new business, obviously still shocked from the losses they suffered from the previous break and enter. The police attended the premise and found it secure, the business owner also attended the premise to find it secure with no sign of entry. The alarm company attended that day to discover a new contact on a window had failed, triggering the single zone alarm. This was immediately fixed and the alarm system has been trouble free since that event.

A few months later the business owner received a false alarm fine for the response that was not initiated by the alarm company, but by the business owner themselves. The alarm system was serviced and has been working without issue since that event. The problem now is the false alarm bylaw fine and had the City still had its forgiveness policy in the bylaw, this would be a non-issue and lesson learned by the business owner having received a letter from the City advising that the forgiveness alarm call had been used for this calendar year.

All civic addresses have “call histories” as a matter of record with the RCMP. This is a means of a heads up for attending members so they are aware of any history that could be considered “dangerous” before arriving on scene. Alarm companies have no idea what “history” a premise with an alarm system may have had in the past, unless they were the original service provider (which isn’t always the case with system take overs from another company).

The case being this, if there was a clear means to appeal the issuance of a bylaw fine, this wouldn’t be before you. But as the current bylaw is written there is no avenue to appeal this fine. Calls to Bylaws are answered with the response to call the RCMP, the call to the RCMP is answered with a response to call City Bylaws. This is no way to address a mistake, other than to be forced to pay for a bylaw fine for something that didn’t actually occur, by that I mean the alarm company didn’t contact the police due to the response protocols for single zone alarms. This was a user initiated call to the police and is outside of the alarm bylaw. This is a human calling in, for fear their premise is being broken into without any form of independent confirmation.

This is why many B.C. municipalities have latitude in their alarm bylaws to account for the occasional false alarm or in this case non alarm call. We all want to work together home owners, business owners, police and the City to ensure we do everything we can to keep our community safe and secure. Having an “appeal process” for our alarm bylaw, in plain written language, would go a long way to making that happen. In this case the alarm company addressed the issue the very next day and there have been no alarms from the premise to this date. The alarm company has been working with the business owner to address this “false alarm fine” with the City to no effect, as no one wants to address the fact this was not an alarm company triggered police call.

I would like Council and Mayor to consider this as a “misuse of the alarm bylaw” for that reason. If the call came from a resident or business owner and not from a monitoring company, then the bylaw is not valid and the issuance of a fine is an over reach as the alarm company didn’t contact the police directly. The choice by the business owner to call the police amounts to a 911 call where no fine would be applied on a first case basis. This is why I have been asking the Safety Committee to review this bylaw and re-establish some latitude and an appeal process to address these types of issues. Everyone is entitled to fairness under the law or bylaw as the case may be. The reinstatement of a false alarm grace policy would go a long way to being fair and equitable for the community and businesses while ensuring those who repeatedly generate false alarms are held accountable for their failure to ensure their alarm systems are properly maintained.

No one wants to put our RCMP members in harm’s way time and again for nuisance alarms, but we also need to see fairness applied to any law or bylaw that involving monetary fines without a venue for appealing that fine.

I ask Council and Mayor to consider the re-establishment of the original Prince George alarm bylaw, allowing any home owner or business owner, a one call per year grace, per civic address for a “single zone” false alarm. This is fair, it is equitable and in concert with an established appeals process, this maintains public confidence that our bylaws are written in the interest of all those concerned. We all make mistakes, and we all have the capacity to learn from a mistake without being unduly penalized as a result.

Please look at what the other communities are doing in respect to false alarms, alarm permits as in the case of Vancouver, and false alarm forgiveness. They all have some form of written appeals process and forgiveness policies.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Zukowski

Business owner, Member of the Mayor’s Committee for Community Safety