

June 04, 2021

To: Peace River Regional District
Attention: CAO Shawn Dahlen
shawn.dahlen@prrd.bc.ca
Sent via Email

Dear Shawn Dahlen:

Summary

In this letter, E-Comm will provide an update on the developments concerning “Next Generation 9-1-1” (NG9-1-1), the federally-mandated modernization of the national emergency communications networks. Most importantly, we want to inform you of the potential cost implications for this nation-wide system upgrade, starting in 2022. In anticipation of these costs, the E-Comm Board of Directors recently endorsed the establishment of a new, dedicated technology levy that will apply to all our call-taking and dispatch clients. Over the next few months, we will be reaching out to provide more detail on the following:

- an estimate of the new levy and the method by which it will be determined
- the expected timing for commencement of the new levy
- the timing for E-Comm’s operational transition to the new NG9-1-1 platform.

Background

On June 1, 2017, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (“CRTC”) issued Telecom Regulatory Policy 2017-182: “Next Generation 9-1-1 – Modernizing 9-1-1 networks to meet the public safety needs of Canadians”²⁴. This policy sets out the CRTC’s determinations on the implementation and provision of NG9-1-1 networks and services in Canada and its view that such a transition would provide Canadians with access to new, innovative emergency services and capabilities.

As part of its decision, the CRTC has ordered TELUS to build a NG9-1-1 network to replace the existing E9-1-1 network in British Columbia. The decommissioning of the existing E9-1-1 network was originally set by the CRTC to occur on June 30, 2023. However, that date was suspended in early 2020 and the CRTC is currently conducting a public consultation process to re-establish transition dates. E-Comm’s current expectation is that the transition of Public Safety Answering Points (“PSAPs”) across Canada to the NG9-1-1 network will occur over a period of three years, as described in the previously mentioned regulatory policy 2017-182, starting later this summer.

²⁴ See <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2017/2017-182.htm>



We are aware that TELUS, as part of its preparation for the NG9-1-1 transition and pursuant to direction from the CRTC, will be presenting Local Government Authorities (LGAs) with new NG9-1-1 agreements that will replace existing 9-1-1 agreements. Historically, these agreements were executed by Regional Districts, incorporated municipalities or a mix of both per jurisdiction. The new NG9-1-1 agreements will outline the technical, administrative and operational obligations that LGAs will have to assume in order to maintain 9-1-1 service within in their jurisdiction through the NG 9-1-1 transition.

Current E-Comm Activities

As a service provider, E-Comm is preparing to assume some of these technical and operational obligations on behalf of our call-taking and dispatch clients. We have been testing NG9-1-1 technology since early 2020 and recently announced an important milestone – the successful completion of an NG9-1-1 call transfer (in a test environment) with our counterparts at Calgary 9-1-1. This is a significant accomplishment, demonstrating required NG-9-1-1 functionality to downstream/transfer 9-1-1 calls to another PSAP (external to E-Comm) and deliver call-related data. This is also an example of a new level of technical interoperability that will be realized through NG9-1-1, as transferring 9-1-1 calls to a PSAP in another province is a capability we do not currently have.

Although this work has enabled us to develop a significant level of expertise and experience with NG9-1-1 systems, it has also highlighted the level of complexity associated with NG9-1-1 and the need for additional funding and resources, to support the technical and operational transition and to address the risks associated with it.

In addition, this mandated technology change will require E-Comm to undertake a major technology program to replace the call-handling systems used by its call takers to process 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls. This technology replacement will enable us to establish compatibility with mandated NG9-1-1 technical and operational standards.

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Our goal is to commence operational transition in the latter half of 2022 in order complete transition within the three year window. However, to achieve that goal will require E-Comm to acquire additional resources, and procure and implement the necessary technical systems. All of these items are dependent on securing the required funding from our partners.



At this time, our focus for costing and overall program planning is entirely on the transition of voice-based NG9-1-1 services and the CRTC-mandated introduction of Real-time Text messaging (RTT) for 9-1-1 by 2024. As you may be aware, the NG9-1-1 platform will eventually support the implementation of other forms of 9-1-1 service that involve multimedia communications. These other types of service have not been defined at this point.

Finally, while E-Comm's NG9-1-1 efforts are currently focused on the technology necessary to implement the system's new capabilities, as the "go live" date approaches, E-Comm will also need to address a host of other issues necessary to effect a smooth operational transition. A non-exhaustive list includes training staff to use the new equipment and updated procedures and policies, impacts on quality assurance and voice / data records management and business intelligence and reports.

The NG9-1-1 initiative is ramping up quickly across Canada. E-Comm is committing to keeping our clients informed about developments and we will continue to provide you updates as we get them.

Please feel free to contact me at the number below.

Sincerely,

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President and CEO

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