



REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: CS-BRD-026

From: David Sturgeon, Protective Services Manager

Date: November 12, 2020

Subject: E-Comm 911 Answering Contract 2 Year Extension

RECOMMENDATION #1: [Corporate Weighted]

That the Regional Board provide written notice to E-Comm 911 to extend the current contract for an additional 2 years starting January 1, 2022 until December 31, 2023 for \$306,641 and further that the Chair and Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to sign the agreement on behalf of the Regional District.

RECOMMENDATION #2: [Corporate Unweighted]

That the Regional Board authorize staff to negotiate a 5 year agreement with E-Comm 911, for 911 call taking services and Next Generation 911 capital upgrades, to start January 1, 2024, and that a report be brought back to the Regional Board for consideration.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

The Peace River Regional District (PRRD) entered into contract with E-Comm 911 for 911 call taking services on May 17, 2017, following a public procurement process resulting in E-Comm as the only agency to submit a proposal for the service. Under the current contract, which is set to expire on December 31, 2021, the contract may be extended for up to an additional five years if notice is given prior to December 31, 2020. It is recommended that the contract be extended for two years as the cost of capital upgrades for Next Generation 911 (NG 911) is still being identified and will be shared between all partners in the service. E-Comm anticipates having this information for discussion with all partners in Q1-2021.

Since switching to E-Comm from the RCMP the PRRD has saved approximately \$1.5 million and has received exceptional service.

In BC 911 call answer services are currently provided by only three agencies:

- E-Comm 911 who provides service to 25 regional districts
- City of Nelson who provides service only to the City of Nelson
- City of Prince Rupert who is currently transitioning to E-Comm

Next Generation 911:

E-Comm is currently the only 911 service provider in BC working with the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) Emergency Services Working Group on the development of Next Generation 911 (NG-911). This working group only contains four 911 call centers in Canada - two in Ontario and one in Quebec in addition to E-Comm in Vancouver.

NG-911 is the transition of 911 analog systems to Internet Protocol based systems. The change will enhance emergency 911 services to create a faster, more resilient system allowing voice, data, photos, videos and text messages to flow seamlessly from the public to 911 and then to responding agencies.

The CRTC has mandated that NG-911 will be implemented across Canada by March 2022. Due to the technology, expertise and capital required to implement NG-911 it will be extremely challenging for any small organization to provide the service. The analog 911 system that was designed in an era of landline telephones and assumes the calls are coming from fixed, known addresses is slated to be decommissioned by March 30, 2024. Today, most emergency calls originate from smartphones and IP devices, often while away from home. As a result, these changes are driving this historic evolution to next-generation NG-911.

Due to the unprecedented challenges involved in implementing NG-911 it is recommended that the PRRD sign another 2 year agreement with E-Comm until it can be determined the exact costs and timelines associated with the transition to NG-911. Being a partner with E-Comm throughout the NG-911 transition will help the PRRD understand the scope of changes to come with E-Comm who is currently spearheading the transition to NG-911 with the CRTC.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Regional Board decline to extend the contract with E-Comm 911 and issue a RFP for 2021 to look for alternative options.
2. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

- ☒ Responsive Service Delivery
 - ☒ Enhance Emergency Planning and Response Capacity
- ☒ Advocacy
 - ☒ Emergency Response Capacity for Local Governments

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

PRRD's currently pays the following for service from E-Comm:

- 2020-\$139,310
- 2021-\$143,490

The PRRD's E-Comm Representative has stated that the fees will increase by 4.5% per year. The projected costs for an additional two year contract is as follows:

- 2022-\$149,947
- 2023-\$156,694

Anticipated operating fees past 2023 are as follows. This does not include capital upgrades for NG-911 that all regional districts and municipalities will be responsible for contributing to:

- 2024-\$163,745
- 2025-\$171,114
- 2026-\$178,814

Since the PRRD changed 911 call answering providers from the RCMP to E-Comm in 2017, it has translated into approximately \$1.5 million in savings to provide the service. The RCMP's annual cost for the service was over \$450,000 per year.

NG-911 implementation is not included in this contract and will require an additional capital purchase for each organization in British Columbia - this cost has yet to be determined.

If the Regional Board chooses to not extend the current contract, the PRRD may need to issue a request for proposals in 2021 for the service which could lead to an increased contract cost after final negotiations.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

None.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):

The feedback from the fire chiefs in the PRRD has been very positive regarding the level of service with only two issues being identified in the early stages of the transition. Both issues related to voice over internet protocol (VOIP) connections that were routed to another destination and had to be rerouted back to E-Comm for answer and transfer to responding agency.

Due to the manner in which the Telus databases are structured in BC and in Alberta, the PRRD cannot switch to an Alberta service provider.

Questions asked by the PRRD board members at the E-Comm Delegation Nov.12 2020

Question: As there are residents within PRRD area that are on the BC/Alberta boarder will NG911 help reduce / improve the current time / process it takes to move the call to the required PSAP? (I.E. misdirect or misrouted calls because of location accuracy issues)

Answer: NG 911 isn't, by itself, going to fix the location accuracy issue at the beginning (there is a recommendation under discussion to introduce handset based location in March 2022 for both E911 and NG911). There is a further change that will be introduced for NG 911 after the initial transition that will introduce location-based call routing. Both of these enhancements will solve the problem once and for all.

Question: What will NG911 mean for VOIP calls? I.E. calls initiated using a satellite radio?

Answer: Further enhancements to NG 911 (after initial introduction) will enable location-based routing of VoIP calls. This won't be the case day 1 but will be introduced around the time location-based routing is introduced for wireless calls.

Question: For callers within the PRRD area who use Northern Tel vs TELUS how will NG911 impact these callers, will the experience change or stay the same?

Answer: The CRTC has just started an activity (TIF 94) to address the question of Basic 911 transition to NG 911. Northwestel currently isn't mandated to implement NG 911 but that will eventually change. In the short term, there will be some recommendations developed to improve Basic 911, like providing wireless location through a data aggregator like RapidSOS. This is already happening in Newfoundland (which is also B911).

Attachments:

1. PRRD YTD Oct.21, 2020 Performance Results.
2. Peace River Regional District Performance Report 2017, 2018, 2019, YTD Oct 21, 2020