



## STAFF REPORT

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2025-12-04

From: Adam Swartz, Manager of IT, GIS, and Fire Dispatch

Subject: Provincial Review of E-Comm and Emergency Communications Model

Reviewed by: Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer

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### RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** the Fraser Valley Regional District Board continues to engage with UBCM on defining a provincial role in emergency communications, and supports E-Comm's implementation of governance and financial reforms.

### BACKGROUND

The Province of British Columbia commissioned two major reports in 2025 in response to growing concerns about the emergency communications system. Rising call volumes, increasingly severe climate-related events, and the federally mandated transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) highlighted vulnerabilities in the current model. These pressures exposed gaps in governance, funding, and operational resiliency, prompting a need for comprehensive review and reform.

The first report, the *Independent Review of E-Comm*, examined the organization's governance structure, financial sustainability, and operational performance. E-Comm is the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) in BC, handling 99% of 9-1-1 calls. They also provide police and fire dispatch services as well as maintain the largest multi-jurisdictional radio network in the province. E-Comm's dominance, combined with escalating costs and limited provincial oversight, raised questions about transparency, accountability, and long-term viability.

The second report, the *Emergency Communications Service Delivery Model*, looked beyond E-Comm to the broader PSAP ecosystem. It assessed how emergency communications services are delivered across the province and proposed future models for governance, funding, and standardization. The report emphasized the need for a clearly defined provincial role to ensure consistency, resiliency, and equitable access to services.

Together, these reports aim to strengthen public safety outcomes by addressing systemic weaknesses and positioning BC's emergency communications system for modernization and sustainability.

The FVRD relies on E-Comm for both its primary and secondary PSAP services. The primary PSAP handles 9-1-1 call answering and is administered through Combined E9-1-1 (Service Area 246). The secondary PSAP provides fire dispatch services and is administered through Regional Fire Dispatch (Service Area 247).

## DISCUSSION

### Independent Review of E-Comm

This review found that E-Comm's **governance structure has not evolved to match its expanded role**. Originally designed to oversee a regional radio network, the current 23-member Board is too large and lacks independence, limiting strategic decision making. Board members often face conflicting responsibilities between their fiduciary duties to E-Comm and their roles representing member organizations. Information flow to the Board is inconsistent, with limited financial transparency and insufficient strategic oversight.

Financially, E-Comm's **costs have grown at a compound annual rate of over 12%, significantly** outpacing inflation and population growth. Rising levies have created pressure on local government, and the existing cost allocation model is opaque and inequitable. Operationally, while service levels have improved in recent years, resiliency gaps remain, particularly in redundancy and business continuity planning. The transition to NG9-1-1 adds complexity and cost uncertainty, requiring significant investment in technology and training.

### Key Recommendations:

- **Governance:** Reduce the Board size to 9–12 members, introduce independent directors, and clearly define roles and responsibilities. Implement structured tenure policies, strengthen committee effectiveness, and create opportunities for oversight through a provincial governance and legislative framework.
- **Financial Model:** Implement a new costing and pricing model to improve transparency and equity in levy calculations. Strengthen budgeting and forecasting processes.
- **Operational Resiliency:** Accelerate business continuity planning, expand redundancy capacity, and improve interagency collaboration.
- **Performance Management:** Introduce standardized service level targets, enhance reporting, and develop a comprehensive organizational scorecard.
- **Workforce and Training:** Formalize workforce planning, improve cultural safety training, and strengthen leadership structures.

## Emergency Communications Service Delivery Model

This report examined PSAP services within BC and identified systemic weaknesses: fragmented governance, inconsistent service standards, and reliance on local government funding. The absence of a clearly defined provincial role has led to variability in service quality and limited capacity for modernization. The report evaluated four future models for service delivery:

1. Enhanced Status Quo – Minor improvements without legislative change.
2. Regulate the Sector – Introduce provincial standards and oversight.
3. Manage the Sector – Shared responsibility with structured provincial oversight.
4. Become the Sector – Province assumes full responsibility through a Crown corporation.

**Option 3 (“Manage the Sector”) was recommended as the most balanced approach, enabling provincial oversight while maintaining local involvement. This model supports standardization, resiliency, and financial sustainability without fully centralizing operations.**

### Key Recommendations:

- **Legislative Reform:** Define the Province’s role in governance and enforcement of standards.
- **Standards and Regulations:** Establish province-wide service level requirements, training standards, and resiliency benchmarks.
- **Funding Model:** Explore sustainable mechanisms, including provincial contributions, end-user levies, and modernization grants.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Ensure inclusive consultation, particularly with Indigenous communities, and align with Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) requirements.
- **Futureproofing:** Leverage NG9-1-1 as a catalyst for modernization and integrate emerging technologies responsibly.

### COST

There is no immediate financial impact to the FVRD at this stage. Future implications may arise from provincial decisions on funding models, such as levies or cost-sharing arrangements.

### CONCLUSION

The two reports are complementary: one addresses organizational readiness within E-Comm, while the other focuses on province-wide PSAP governance reform. Improving emergency communication services will require legislative clarity, sustainable funding, and collaboration among all stakeholders.

The FVRD should monitor developments and advocate for equitable access and predictable costs for regional districts.