



**Emergency
Communications
Professionals of BC**
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 8911

November 16, 2021

Mayor Jack Crompton
Municipal Hall
4325 Blackcomb Way
Whistler, B.C. V8E 0X5

Dear Mayor Crompton,

I am writing to you today about the critical situation at Emergency Communications for British Columbia Inc. (E-Comm). Recent media stories have shed light on a number of challenges and resulting service delays but have failed to tell the entire story regarding E-Comm's internal challenges and the necessary funding required to protect public health and safety.

In 1999, E-Comm was established as a non-profit corporation to provide emergency call taking and dispatch services, and to provide and maintain the emergency radio system used by police, fire, and ambulance services within Metro Vancouver. When first established, E-Comm provided 9-1-1 call answer for Metro Vancouver and call-taking and dispatch services for a single agency, the Vancouver Police Department. Today, E-Comm answers 9-1-1 calls for 99% of callers in BC and provides call-taking and dispatch services for 33 police agencies and 40 fire departments across the province. E-Comm's expansion represents growth of an effective shared service model in which substantial savings are realized by local government who would otherwise be required to operate their own independent service.

A recent report commissioned by E-Comm from the firm Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) found that the organization is substantially understaffed and relies heavily on staff accepting overtime shifts and working through their daily breaks to maintain its base level of operations. This situation is already challenging when call volumes remain within normal, expected levels. During any type of crises that cause call surges - including extreme weather events such as this summer's heatwave - E-Comm has shown it is incapable of meeting its service standards. This translates into delays in taking 9-1-1 calls, delays in dispatching necessary services, and delays in people receiving emergency support when they need it most.

The extreme challenges experienced at E-Comm over the past few months is in part directly related to understaffing at BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS). However, the PwC report makes it clear that the issues with BCEHS are only one component of the challenges faced by E-Comm: significant deficiencies exist within the organization itself beyond the stressors from BCEHS. E-Comm needs immediate increased revenue to address critical, ongoing deficiencies before these deficiencies result in a public health and safety failure with catastrophic impacts.

Attached to this letter is a full backgrounder on the challenges faced by E-Comm and recommendations for both increased funding and a change to the funding formula. These recommendations will have the greatest impact on municipalities like Whistler, where both police dispatch and fire dispatch service are procured from E-Comm. Municipalities using multiple services are those most impacted by the ongoing service deficits – it is these communities whose citizens face the greatest risk.

Thank you for taking the time to review our materials. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly if you have questions or would like to review the content of our materials in a meeting or via a phone call. You can reach me directly via email at donald.grant@ecpbc.ca or 604-800-6088.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald R. Grant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a stylized "A" at the end.

Donald Grant
President, CUPE Local 8911

Attachment

sb:jk/cope491