

March 12, 2024

NG9-1-1 Update for Regional Districts Regarding Importance of Executing TELUS LGA Agreement

Further to previous communications concerning Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1), I am writing to provide a summary of the NG9-1-1 program and to highlight some related developing risks of which regional districts, as the level of government responsible for the primary public safety answer points in British Columbia, need to be aware. **Please review this correspondence as it requires attention and action from your regional district, specifically execution of a Local Government Agreement with TELUS.**

Executive Summary

The Government of Canada has mandated a move from the existing analog telephone systems to digital (internet protocol-based) communication networks for 9-1-1 calls across the country. The current 9-1-1 system is scheduled to be decommissioned in March 2025. Here are some critical factors of which E-Comm's regional district partners need to be aware:

- the project is technologically challenging and resource intensive
- E-Comm needs to begin a structured migration not later than June 2024 if it is to:
 - meet the March 2025 deadline, and
 - avoid increased project costs beyond those already covered by grants from the Province of British Columbia
- a major barrier to timely migration is the fact that many regional districts have yet to execute LGAs with TELUS.

Why Next Generation 9-1-1?

In order to update Canada's aging 9-1-1 infrastructure and provide advanced capabilities that today's 30+ year old telephone system simply can't deliver, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has mandated a move from today's analog telephone systems to digital (internet protocol-based) communication networks for 9-1-1 calls across the country. Called Next Generation 9-1-1 or NG9-1-1, this system will improve emergency communications and response for the public and emergency responders. NG9-1-1 will improve the public's access to emergency response services by allowing 9-1-1 Public Safety Answer Points (PSAP) centres to exchange additional data and information with responders beyond voice communications, improve call processing times, enhance situational awareness, and increase responder safety.



Background

Recognizing that transitioning to NG9-1-1 is a major project, technically complex, and expensive, E-Comm has worked successfully, with municipal and regional district partners, to lobby the provincial government to fund a significant portion of the associated costs. With stable funding assured, E-Comm has built the capacity required to effect this vital and mandatory transition between old and new technologies.

In British Columbia (and Alberta) TELUS is the Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet) provider, the network architecture upon which NG9-1-1 will operate. TELUS is also the network provider for most of the existing legacy Basic 9-1-1 (B9-1-1) and Enhanced 9-1-1 (E9-1-1) service in BC. Most regional districts will have an executed agreement with TELUS for access to these systems (likely from many years ago) but with the introduction of NG9-1-1, TELUS requires regional districts to sign new agreements to meet certain requirements of NG9-1-1. These agreements, called Local Governing Authority (LGA) Agreements, set out the responsibilities of TELUS and the regional districts regarding NG9-1-1.

It is important to recognize that unless the CRTC delays implementation of NG9-1-1, and even more significantly, the decommissioning of the legacy 9-1-1 system, callers trying to place 9-1-1 calls within regional districts that have not (i) reached an LGA Agreement for access and (ii) updated their primary PSAP to be NG9-1-1 compliant, will not have 9-1-1 service.

Current State

E-Comm has made several applications to the CRTC, formally known as “Part 1 Applications” regarding various aspects of the NG 9-1-1 rollout. One of these addresses our concern that not all PSAPs in BC will be ready for NG9-1-1 by March 2025, and asking the CRTC to consider extending that deadline or leave the legacy 9-1-1 systems operational for longer so as not to impact access to 9-1-1. Not only have other organizations joined E-Comm in submitting that Part 1, but other organizations across Canada have also made applications of their own along similar lines. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know when the CRTC will reach a decision and what that decision will ultimately be. We must therefore act as though the March 2025 deadline is firm.

E-Comm is working steadily to meet that deadline and has the plans, budget, contracts and the required resources in place to do so. However, factors external to E-Comm are creating a risk that (i) the deadline will not be met and (ii) that the actual costs of implementation will exceed the approved, budgeted costs. One major source of risk is unanticipated delays in the execution of the LGA Agreements, and E-Comm is acutely aware that only 12 of 27 regional districts in BC



have so far done so. E-Comm will be unable to onboard the regional districts it serves until they have all executed an agreement with TELUS.

Next Steps and Risks

E-Comm's planned NG9-1-1 onboarding schedule allows time for 9-1-1 call traffic to be migrated in a structured and incremental manner, allowing us to:

- more time to become more familiar with the operation of the new network,
- validate that call flows are working as designed,
- assess that call quality is what it should be,
- train staff on the new processes, and,
- identify and remedy any performance issues as quickly as possible.

We had planned to begin the migration this quarter, but delays in the execution of LGA Agreements have precluded this. Employing the last of the contingency in our schedule we are confident that, if the LGA Agreements are executed by May 31, 2024, we can complete the migration by the March 2025 deadline.

As previously noted, one of the risks of not migrating in time is the loss of 9-1-1 service. There are others. For example, the existing 9-1-1 network is aging (part of the rationale behind the move to NG9-1-1) and our own PBX for handling legacy 9-1-1 calls is past end of life. Furthermore, delay creates a risk of significant cost overruns into 2025.

E-Comm would be unable to execute as complex a project as NG9-1-1 implementation with only its standard staff and has therefore recruited an expanded temporary workforce with a broad range of technical, project management and other skills. We are also relying on enhanced support from vendors and other service providers to ensure we have the necessary capabilities to complete the migration successfully.

Delaying the start of this migration beyond June 2024 increases the risk that onboarding will not be completed by March 2025 and that the costs of migration exceed those forecast and therefore those covered by the provincial grant. As a not-for-profit organization, E-Comm will need to recover those costs, and at least a portion of that recovery would likely have to come from the regional districts. **For each month after June 2024 E-Comm is unable to commence the five-month onboarding plan, we estimate those costs at over \$1M per month that we would apportion among various NG9-1-1 stakeholders beginning in 2025.** Therefore, there are compelling financial as well as public safety reasons to complete the migration in accordance with the current plans which are predicated on all LGA agreements being signed not later than May 31, 2024.



TELUS and Government of BC Contacts & Resource

As TELUS' 9-1-1 team has continued to partner with and collaborate with the regional districts which have provided feedback but have yet to sign TELUS' CRTC-mandated NG9-1-1 LGA Agreement, TELUS has made minor changes to the certain sections to address the specific circumstances that exist in British Columbia, notably around BC-specific regional district constructs as well as NG9-1-1 GIS obligations. To those regional districts that have yet to execute the NG9-1-1 LGA Agreement with TELUS, TELUS will share the revised document with you as soon as it is completed. If you have not already been in contact with TELUS about the LGA Agreement for your regional district, please contact Assunta Marozzi. Assunta is TELUS's primary point of contact for LGA Agreements and would be happy to take you through the process. She can be reached at assunta.marozzi2@telus.com.

Three Government of British Columbia ministries in particular are monitoring the NG9-1-1 rollout. These are Citizens' Services, Public Safety and Solicitor General and Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. If you would like further information about their respective roles in this initiative, please feel free to contact Mr. Ivan Rincon of the Connectivity Division of Citizen's Services at ivan.rincon@gov.bc.ca, Mr. Darrion Cambell of the Policing & Security Branch of Public Safety and Solicitor General at darrion.campbell@gov.bc.ca or Nancy Liesch, GeoBC at Water Land and Resource Stewardship.

Finally, as I hope you are already aware, GeoBC has circulated correspondence announcing that a new NG9-1-1 related website is now public and seeking feedback from a broad range of stakeholders on how it may be improved. Please visit <https://ng911gisdata.gov.bc.ca> for more. GeoBC will also be reaching out to discuss how the province can work together with local governments, First Nations and 9-1-1 agencies to communicate our support for this transition. to understand GIS data system concerns and to support the development of coordinated data management processes.




Further Updates

I anticipate writing again soon with updates on other E-Comm and NG9-1-1 related topics and will of course also keep you abreast of developments relating specifically to the LGA Agreements.

In the interim, I'd welcome any questions you may have or hearing any concerns you may wish to raise.

Thank you,


Stephen Thatcher, *Vice President, Operations*

E-Comm 9-1-1
Helping to Save Lives and Protect Property

cc: Union of BC Municipalities

