

October 6, 2022

The Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
P.O. Box 9010 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Email: PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: 911 Service Delivery in B.C.

Dear Minister Farnworth,

On behalf of the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM), I am writing to request that the provincial government assume greater responsibility for emergency communications in British Columbia. As part of this request, UBCM is recommending that the Province work with local governments and other key stakeholders to implement much-needed changes to support 911 service delivery. These changes should include the following:

- Creation of a provincial 911 governance model, with local government representation, to address policy and service standard issues;
- Development of consistent 911 service standards, without increasing service costs for local governments; as well as guidance for police, fire and ambulance call takers across B.C.;
- Development of a provincial strategy for the modernization of 911 services, including opportunities to best utilize Next Generation 911 technology; and,
- Implementation of a 911 call answer levy on cellular devices, to address current and future financial challenges associated with the delivery of 911 services.

The increasing frequency and severity of disasters, 911 service disruptions earlier this year, and growing annual call volume have all highlighted system vulnerabilities and emphasized the importance of a resilient and reliable emergency communications system. Stronger provincial leadership and implementation of the proposed reforms would help address many ongoing issues, while putting British Columbia in a better position to take advantage of Next Generation 911 capabilities.

The development of a funding mechanism will help B.C. move towards a sustainable service delivery model where new costs are not transferred to local taxpayers. UBCM has repeatedly sought for the implementation of a call answer levy on cellular devices, including a request that all associated revenue be administered by an

independent body. Last month, UBCM's members endorsed a resolution re-iterating the need for a 911 funding mechanism, as well as governance and operational reforms to help modernize and improve service delivery.

Modernization of the emergency communications system will also be critical to effectively respond to broader issues across B.C. For example, the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act has recommended that, as part of a continuum of response to mental health, addictions and other complex social issues, the Province integrate mental health within 911 call options. UBCM, in its formal response to this report, is supportive of this recommendation.

UBCM has long supported improvements to 911 service delivery, including through participation on a 2019 provincial steering committee and prior work to advance a call answer levy on cellular devices. The upcoming deadline to implement Next Generation 911 and recent events have accelerated the need for improvements to the current framework. It is important for the Province to take a greater leadership role, and work with local governments and other stakeholders to address new and ongoing challenges related to 911 service delivery.

I thank you for considering UBCM's recommendations, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely



Jen Ford
UBCM President

cc: *Douglas Scott, Deputy Solicitor General, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General*

David Pilling, A/ Executive Director, Municipal Police Governance & Oversight, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Oliver Grüter-Andrew, President and Chief Executive Officer, E-Comm 911

Jasmine Bradley, Executive Director of Communications & Public Affairs, E-Comm 911