

Staff Report for Decision

DATE OF MEETING JULY 28, 2025

AUTHORED BY TIM DOYLE, FIRE CHIEF

SUBJECT E-COMM 9-1-1 CONTRACT UPDATE

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Council authorization to enter into an agreement with E-Comm 9-1-1 for the provision of 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Services in 2025, on behalf of the City of Nanaimo as part of the Central Island 911 partnership (City of Nanaimo, Cowichan Valley Regional District, and the Regional District of Nanaimo).

Recommendation

That Council authorize the Mayor and Corporate Officer to sign an agreement with E-Comm for the provision of 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Services in 2025, as City representatives of the CI911 partnership.

BACKGROUND

What is E-Comm 9-1-1?

E-Comm is a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), where 9-1-1 calls are received when someone dials 9-1-1 during an emergency. E-Comm answers 99% of all 9-1-1 calls in British Columbia, connecting callers to the appropriate emergency service agency. This process typically takes less than a minute. Local governments contract E-Comm to provide primary 9-1-1 call-taking services, after which calls are transferred to the appropriate dispatch provider.

In 2024, E-Comm answered approximately 2,049,856 9-1-1 calls across British Columbia. Of these, 58% were directed to police, 35% to ambulance services, and 7% to fire departments.

Nanaimo Emergency Services Dispatch

In 1994, the City of Nanaimo entered into an agreement with the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) to establish and operate a 9-1-1 call answer service for central Vancouver Island. Until 2015, the City of Nanaimo managed the 9-1-1 call-answering function within its police building. When RCMP E-Division relocated dispatch operations to Courtenay, the 9-1-1 call-answering service was transferred to E-Comm.

Similarly, in 1994, fire dispatch centres were established by the City of Nanaimo and the CVRD. By 2003, regional discussions around consolidating fire dispatch services led to the formation of the CI911 dispatch partnership among the RDN, CVRD, and the City of Nanaimo. The CI911

agreement came into effect in 2004. Although the City of Nanaimo no longer operates a fire dispatch centre, the CI911 partnership remains active for the purposes of managing the E-Comm contract and administering the Call Answer Levy (CAL). The partnership agreement has been renewed several times, with the current agreement set to expire on June 30, 2026.

Today, 9-1-1 calls from the City of Nanaimo are initially answered by E-Comm in Vancouver. Afterwards, Fire-related incidents are transferred to the Surrey Fire Dispatch Centre for action by Nanaimo Fire Rescue, police-related calls are transferred to RCMP E-Division in Courtenay, and medical emergencies are transferred to BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) dispatch in Victoria. |

DISCUSSION

CI911 E-Comm Call-Answer Funding

The CI911 partnership follows a cost-sharing formula based on the populations of the member jurisdictions:

- City of Nanaimo: 48%
- CVRD: 43%
- RDN: 9%

These cost-sharing allocations have been updated for 2025 based on the most recent Census population figures. The E-Comm contract is partially funded through a Call Answer Levy (CAL) applied to landline subscribers only. This levy is collected from telecommunication providers Shaw, Telus, Rogers and Bell. Since cellular subscribers - who represent a significant share of 9-1-1 calls - are not subject to this levy, funding limitations exist. In September 2023, Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) delegates called on the provincial government to introduce a levy for cellular customers; however, no changes to this framework have taken place to date.

E-Comm 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Service Contract Term

Historically, CI911 has entered into multi-year agreements with E-Comm. However, due to the ongoing transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911), E-Comm is only offering a one-year contract for 2025. Once NG911 implementation is complete, longer-term contracts may again be considered.

What is Next Generation 911?

Canada's current 9-1-1 system, now over 30 years old, is being replaced due to technological limitations. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has mandated a transition from the analog system to a digital platform known as NG911.

NG911 is expected to:

- Support text, video, and multimedia communications
- Improve system resilience and disaster response
- Enhance data exchange with emergency responders
- Improve call processing times and situational awareness

A soft launch of real-time text services was anticipated in May 2024, and the current analog system was scheduled to be decommissioned in March 2025. After that point, PSAPs (Public Safety Answering Points) that had not transitioned to NG9-1-1 would be unable to process 9-1-1 calls. However, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has pushed the deadline back to 2027 due to the complexities of implementing NG911 nationwide. This decision followed consultations with key stakeholders - police, fire, and paramedic services - who raised concerns that, without the extension, Canadians in areas that have not yet transitioned could lose access to 9-1-1.

2025 E-Comm Call Answer Centre Service Contract Cost

The 2025 E-Comm contract for CI911 has a cost of \$522,510. In addition to this cost, there's an administration cost to collecting the 911 Levy Revenue by the telecommunication providers.

Cost-sharing between the CI911 partners is as follows:

	CITY OF NANAIMO	CVRD	RDN	TOTAL
CONTRACT %	48%	43%	9%	
E-COMM CONTRACT	\$250,805	\$224,679	\$47,026	\$522,510
ADMINISTRATION	30,409	27,241	5,702	63,352
911 LEVY REVENUE	(187,200)	(167,700)	(35,100)	(390,000)
NET E-COMM COST	\$ 94,014	\$ 84,220	\$ 17,628	\$ 195,862

The 2025-2029 Financial Plan reflects these costs. |

OPTIONS

Council has the following options to consider:

1. That Council authorize the Mayor and Corporate Officer to sign an agreement with E-Comm for the provision of 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Services in 2025, as City representatives of the CI911 partnership.

- The advantages of this option: Continued access to 9-1-1 services. Supports transition to NG911. Maintains compliance with provincial expectations.
- The disadvantages of this option: Limited to a one-year agreement. Continued uncertainty regarding CAL funding from cellular subscribers.
- Financial Implications: City of Nanaimo responsible for 48% of the contract cost and the 2025-2029 Financial Plan reflects this figure.

2. That Council not proceed with the Agreement.

- The advantages of this option: none.

- The disadvantages of this option: No 9-1-1 coverage for residents. Significant risk to public safety. Non-compliance with provincial emergency service best practices.
- Financial Implications: None, but liability and service risk would be high.

SUMMARY POINTS

- E-Comm handled over 2 million 9-1-1 calls in BC in 2024.
- NG911 transition is mandatory by March 2025.
- CI911 partnership remains intact for call-answering services.
- A one-year contract is proposed for 2025 due to NG911 transition.
- Council approval is required to authorize the agreement.

ATTACHMENTS:

20250728_2025_9-1-1_Call_Answer_Agreement_-_Central_Island_911_Partnership |

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