



BRITISH COLUMBIA

VIA EMAIL

Ref: 657314

June 4, 2024

Colin Plant
Chair
Capital Regional District
625 Fisgard Street
Victoria BC V8W 1R7
Email: crdchair@crd.bc.ca; colin.plant@saanich.ca

Dear Chair Plant:

Thank you for your letter of September 26, 2023, advocating for the implementation of a provincial 9-1-1 cell phone levy in response to the rising costs of 9-1-1 service delivery. Please accept my apology for the delay in responding.

I recognize and appreciate the critical work emergency communications service providers undertake every day in communities throughout the province to ensure public safety, including the work of emergency radio communications services, such as the Capital Region Emergency Service Telecommunications (CREST) service.

As you note, over the past few years, emergency communications service providers have experienced several challenges, including an increase in the complexity and volume of emergency and non-emergency calls and mounting resourcing pressures. I understand these pressures have resulted in higher operating costs. The implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) will add new pressures and costs for both emergency communications service providers and local governments. I recognize that existing funding mechanisms, such as levies on landline services, may not reflect the impacts of these issues.

Last spring, the Province invested \$150 million to offset some of the costs associated with NG911 implementation through 2026. As you are aware, this funding was divided into two parts: \$90 million to E-Comm for technological upgrades and related costs; and \$60 million to the Union of BC Municipalities to support local preparedness for NG911 implementation and provide funding to local governments, First Nations, and public safety answering points in order to assist with their transitional and operational readiness.

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Recently, ministry staff were directed to explore options for a provincial framework to help modernize and strengthen the delivery of 9-1-1 services and support the implementation of NG911. This includes an assessment of potential funding options to support 9-1-1 service delivery. As part of this work, ministry staff will consult with their public safety partners and stakeholders when it is appropriate to do so.

As our government continues to work to ensure British Columbians feel safe, I am grateful for the extraordinary professionals who support and help build safer, stronger and more resilient communities. Through continued partnership, I am confident we can work together to address your concerns and strengthen emergency communications service delivery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Farnworth". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
and Deputy Premier

pc: Lynsey Thompson, Research and Policy Analyst, Policing and Security Branch