E-Comm 9-1-1 2014 ANNUAL REPORT



# **CORPORATE OVERVIEW**

#### Who we are

Through our 9-1-1 call centre, our wide-area radio network used by police, fire and ambulance personnel, and our integrated dispatch service that supports 33 police and fire departments, E-Comm— Emergency Communications for British Columbia Incorporated supports emergency services in the Lower Mainland, the Sunshine Coast, Squamish, Whistler, northern Vancouver Island and the northern, central and southern interior regions of B.C. E-Comm is unique in Canada for its size, breadth of service, and expertise.

Established in 1997 under the provincial *Emergency Communications Corporations Act*, E-Comm is owned by the municipalities and public safety agencies it serves. Operating from a purpose-built facility, E-Comm is recognized nationally as an industry leader whose defining mission is to help save lives, protect property, and build partnerships that help create safer communities in British Columbia.

#### What we do Wide-Area Radio Netwo

#### Wide-Area Radio Network

E-Comm owns and operates the largest tri-service, multi-jurisdictional public safety radio system in British Columbia. Currently the E-Comm radio network is used by BC Emergency Health Services and all police agencies in Metro Vancouver and parts of the Fraser Valley, as well as 12 fire departments in Metro Vancouver.

#### 9-1-1 Call-Answer/Police & Fire Dispatch Services

In 2014, E-Comm expanded its 9-1-1 call-answer services and is now responsible for answering 80% of 9-1-1 calls in B.C. E-Comm also provided dispatch services to 15 police agencies and 18 fire departments. Our integrated multi-jurisdictional dispatch provides increased operational efficiency, economies of scale and the ability to deliver top-tier technology to smaller communities. E-Comm emergency call-takers and dispatchers are supported by a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system that allows for swift and easy access to a wide range of information critical to emergency response.

#### **Technology Services**

E-Comm provides a variety of secure, mission-critical technology services that support its own operations and those of its public safety partners, including multi-jurisdictional CAD systems, records management systems and electronic mapping services. E-Comm's technology service desk operates on a 24/7 basis to ensure continuity of service to our partners and our staff in fulfilling their public safety missions.

# **Our Vision**

Safer communities in British Columbia through excellence in public-safety communication.

# **Our Mission**

To deliver exceptional emergency communication services that help save lives and protect property, and to advance public-safety partnerships.

Our Values Respect Accountability Integrity Service Collaboration

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# MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR AND PRESIDENT & CEO



In 2014 E-Comm celebrated its 15th anniversary. Looking back, much has changed for emergency communications and for our organization since we answered our first 9-1-1 call, dispatched our first police event, and switched on British Columbia's only multi-jurisdictional, tri-service radio system.

Fifteen years ago, less than 35% of 9-1-1 calls were placed from cellular phones. Today that number is 66%. The proliferation of cell phones now provides increased opportunities for the public to report emergencies. As a result, the call volume from high visibility incidents has vastly increased. The ability of individual communication centres to manage this increased

call volume has been one contributing factor to the advancement of consolidated emergency communications and, in particular, the growth of E-Comm's partnerships in providing police and 9-1-1 call-taking services. Technological improvements in wireless locational data provided to 9-1-1 centres has also improved and will continue to do so as we move to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) systems and technologies in the coming years.

Our radio system, a cornerstone of effective emergency response in Metro Vancouver and Abbotsford, has grown from fewer than 1,000 radios in the field to more than 9,000. E-Comm's dispatch partnerships have also expanded from one police agency in June 1999 to 33 police and fire departments throughout Metro Vancouver, the Sunshine Coast, and in Whistler and Squamish.

This course of change and the advancement of our core functions for the benefit of public safety continued in 2014.

We became the primary 9-1-1 answer point for 19 new regional districts on northern Vancouver Island and in the northern, central and southern interior regions of B.C., making E-Comm responsible for 80% of the province's 9-1-1 calls, two-thirds of which originate from Metro Vancouver. The expansion of our 9-1-1 call-answer service not only directly supports our vision of safer communities in British Columbia, but also provides both financial and operational benefits to our shareholders and dispatch partners. E-Comm's service expansion initiatives provide the means to increase staffing to support first responders and the public, and facilitate enhanced technical support, due to the economies of scale that our shared infrastructure and operating model provides.

We were also very proud to have been Canada's first 9-1-1 centre to launch Text-with-9-1-1 (T9-1-1) for the Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing and Speech Impaired. We received our first text message from a Deaf caller on June 8th, on the same date as our first 9-1-1 voice call 15 years earlier. T9-1-1 is one of the early steps in implementing NG9-1-1.

We met major milestones in 2014 related to our replacement of the E-Comm radio system with advanced digital technology known as Project 25 (P25) in the 700 MHz band. The replacement of the radio system, known as the Next Generation Radio Program (NGRP), is the largest technology project E-Comm has carried out since we put the first regional radio network into service in 1999. We have been working closely with our radio partners in the police, fire and ambulance services to design and build a network that will be fully implemented by the end of 2017. The objective is to implement a new radio system that maintains both public and responder safety and serves our region as long as the original system, and with even better features.

E-Comm is well positioned for this major technological undertaking from both financial and technical perspectives, having completed the network design and contract for radio infrastructure equipment in 2014 as planned. We are pleased to report that this initiative is not anticipated to result in any increase in radio levies, due to careful planning.



On that note, from a financial perspective, 2014 was another positive year for E-Comm. The average police dispatch levy increase for 2014 was 1.9%, well below previous estimates. We were also able to hold the annual radio infrastructure levy increases to 3%, which was at the lower end of strategic financial plan estimates. Both of these positive results are attributable to the expansion of our services, new partnerships and prudent fiscal management.

We lowered our cumulative deficit (the remnants of dispatch operations deficits from E-Comm's early years) to less than \$92,000. New public safety alliances, such as our regional district 9-1-1 partnerships and our technical support for PRIMECorp (the organization responsible for the police records management system in British Columbia), enabled us to bolster technology support provided to our partners and increase our call-taking and dispatch staffing to the benefit of public safety. Looking ahead to 2015, we have developed a budget with a total radio infrastructure levy decrease of 1.8%, while still supporting a comprehensive and sustainable means for funding the NGRP. We were also able to propose an average police dispatch levy increase for 2015 of 2.3%, which is also lower than previous strategic financial plan estimates. This is a direct result of the significant growth in 9-1-1 Public-Safety Answer Point service, as well as other revenues from our technology support services.

In recognition of our growing role in public safety communications outside of our original service footprint, E-Comm's shareholders approved changing our name to *Emergency Communications for British Columbia Incorporated*, effective December 1, 2014. The removal of the previous geographic descriptor reflects the scope of technical and other public safety support we are now providing on a provincial scale and is in alignment with our strategic plan, *Vision2020*. We developed our plan in part to expand our public safety partnerships to support what we consider the true benefits of integration: shared staffing, technology, and infrastructure; and to increase operational effectiveness for enhanced public and responder safety.

We also launched a number of other initiatives to enhance our workplace culture, improve service to our partners, increase our organizational effectiveness and advance our public safety education leadership. This included two creative public education campaigns: one aimed at decreasing accidental 9-1-1 calls; and the other on increasing awareness of the difference between emergency and non-emergency calls.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we invite you to read more about the progress we made in 2014 on our major initiatives. We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard-working teams at E-Comm for their incredible contributions this past year and to thank our partners for their support and collaboration and for their ongoing efforts to keep communities safe.

2015 will likely prove to be another important year for public safety and we are certain the next 15 years will bring even more dramatic change to emergency communications. With the support of our staff, partners and the Board of Directors we are confident in our ability to deliver excellence in public safety communication.

Jocelyn Kelley, Board Chair

David Guscott, President & CEO

# 2014 HIGHLIGHTS



Commenced technical support for PRIME-BC, a critical provincial policing tool Executed two successful public education campaigns, on accidental 9-1-1 calls and non-emergency calls

Transitioned Sunshine Coast Regional District Fire to two radio channels

Recruited 112 new staff to support frontline Operations and Technology Services 97% of 9-1-1 calls answered in five seconds or less

> exceeded fire performance standards set out by the National Fire Protection Agency

Met and

APCO Canada Trainer of the Year recipient.

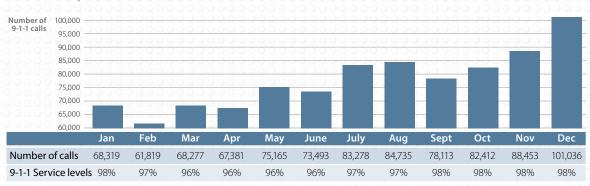
Became first point of contact for 80% of British Columbia's 9-1-1 call volume

First in Canada to launch Textwith-9-1-1 for the hearing/speech impaired

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#### 9-1-1 Service

In 2014, there were 932,481 emergency calls placed to E-Comm, with 97% of them answered in five seconds or less surpassing our annual service level target of 95%.



The availability of the 9-1-1 service was 100%.

Total number of 9-1-1 calls are for Metro Vancouver, the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District, Squamish, Whistler, and commencing in October and November 2014, regional districts in the northern, central and southern Interiors and northern Vancouver Island.

#### Police and Fire emergency calls

In 2014, E-Comm staff managed 389,516 police emergency calls<sup>1</sup> and 41,795 fire emergency calls<sup>#</sup> on behalf of the agencies for which we provide dispatch.

<sup>1</sup> Police emergency calls in 2014 were higher than 2013 due to the addition of Burnaby RCMP and New Westminster Police

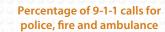
<sup>#</sup> Does not include dispatch events created by BC Emergency Health Services sent to E-Comm Fire Dispatch through CAD

#### Police emergency calls managed by E-Comm



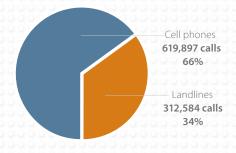
#### Fire emergency calls managed by E-Comm







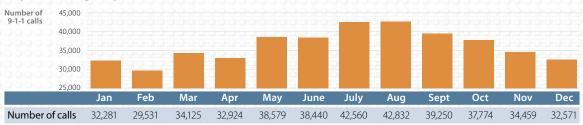
9-1-1 calls from cell phones and landlines



#### Non-emergency service

- In 2014, E-Comm staff managed 435,326<sup>ttt</sup> non-emergency police calls and 26,510 non-emergency fire calls on behalf of its partner agencies.
- <sup>III</sup> Police non-emergency calls in 2014 were higher than 2013 due to the addition of Burnaby RCMP and New Westminster Police

#### Police non-emergency calls managed by E-Comm

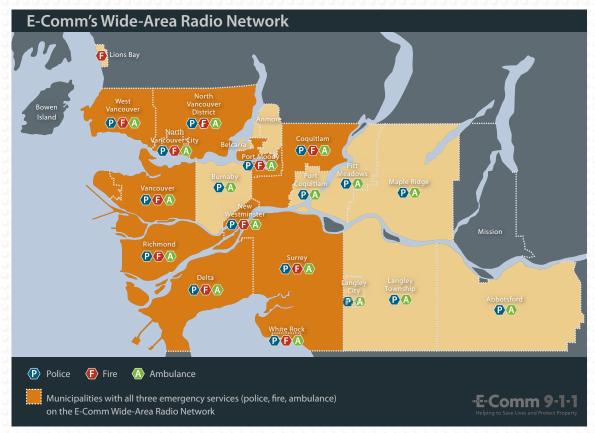


#### Fire non-emergency calls managed by E-Comm



#### Wide-Area Radio Network

Network airtime (in seconds):	498,293,344	Network availability:	99.99%
Radio transmissions:	129,815,168	Total number of radios:	9,268



#### Our people

Our staff have a passion for public safety and our achievements in 2014 are the result of their dedication and effort. Through their individual talents and team collaboration, they effectively managed thousands of police and fire events in the course of the year, kept our technology and systems running seamlessly, and supported the everyday financial, communication and human resource functions that are the foundation of every successful organization.

In addition to carrying out the hundreds of operational, technical and communication tasks required for transitioning 19 new regional districts into our 9-1-1 communications centre, E-Comm staff stepped up to provide leadership and extra support to their colleagues before, during and after each integration. Our peer support teams helped with a variety of initiatives including development of operational procedures, orientation, and geographical training.

We were also extremely proud to learn that one of our trainers, Samantha Bruehler, was awarded the Canadian Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) *Trainer of the Year* award. The award recognizes the work of individuals and teams and the contributions they make to public safety. Training is a critical element of effective 9-1-1 service and this award is well-deserved recognition of our entire training team's continued commitment and the professionalism they exhibit each and every day.



Samantha Bruehler was awarded the Canadian Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials *Trainer of the Year* award.

Our staff also reached out to the public with important safety information throughout the year, including both 9-1-1 Awareness Week in April and Fire Prevention Week in October. They are committed to raising awareness of how the public can help prevent accidental calls, use 9-1-1 more effectively and take important personal safety steps like installing smoke alarms and testing them regularly.

In addition, our staff within Technology Services focused on utilizing leading practices to align information technology needs with business needs to better support both E-Comm operations and those of our partners. Specifically, we developed process and procedures that support technology strategies in order to deliver value and maintain competency and compliance.

As a result of our growing mandate and commitment to service excellence, we welcomed more than 100 new fulltime employees to our organization in 2014, primarily in Operations and Technology Services. We are confident our new colleagues will be as eager to support our partners and the public as all our staff are.



Our employees continued to be engaged in their workplace in other ways in 2014, whether participating on one of our many consultative committees or giving generously to the communities in which they live and serve. From corporate fundraising efforts like Cops for Cancer, the BC Firefighters Stairclimb and the Greater Vancouver food bank, to efforts such as staffing the phones at the Variety Club Show of Hearts telethon and collecting warm clothing and blankets for those in need, our staff have shown that their caring and leadership extends well beyond our building.

We are gratified that our staff continue to embrace our *Vision2020* strategic plan and that employee understanding of our business objectives is at an all-time high. This directly supports our goal of creating a workplace that inspires and engages employees in their work and contributes to employee pride.





#### Our technology

In 2014, considerable advancement of the Next Generation Radio Program—the largest technology project E-Comm has undertaken since building the region's first radio system—was realized as E-Comm and its partners within the police, fire and ambulance services finalized a new network design and selected Motorola Solutions Canada to supply infrastructure equipment for the radio replacement initiative.

The new radio system is scheduled to be fully operational across Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley by the end of 2017 and will be based on digital radio technology known as P25 in the 700 MHz band. This is an open standard that public safety agencies across North America have widely adopted. The technology was endorsed by the Lower Mainland emergency services community following more than a year of consultation, analysis and testing.

We are preparing to implement a best-in-class digital system that will be even more resilient and reliable in the field, provide higher performance, high security and provide greater audio clarity for first responders, particularly in noisy and hazardous environments. Overall, the initiative is on track to meet all project milestones including the launch of a pilot in mid-2015. "We are preparing to implement a best-in-class radio system that will provide higher performance, high security and provide greater audio clarity for first responders, particularly in noisy and hazardous environments."

Chief John McGowan, Richmond Fire-Rescue Services

The entire cost of replacing the radio system infrastructure is estimated at approximately \$60 million (excluding agencyfunded user equipment). However, because this is a planned transition, the annualized cost of the new radio network will be about the same as the annual cost of the current one, even with its enhanced features.

E-Comm joined more than 100 national and local organizations in obtaining its certification for the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC's (APEGBC) *Organizational Quality Management* program in 2014. Certification offers several





benefits for E-Comm's Technology Services division, including formalizing various processes in managing its engineering work. Having these workflows in place will provide additional rigour in our standards, resulting in greater accuracy and consistency to help keep our initiatives on track. This is particularly critical when considering the magnitude of the NGRP.

Received in the fall, the certificate recognizes E-Comm's commitment to following the best practices set out by APEGBC in records management and work with third-party vendors on engineering projects related to Technology Services.

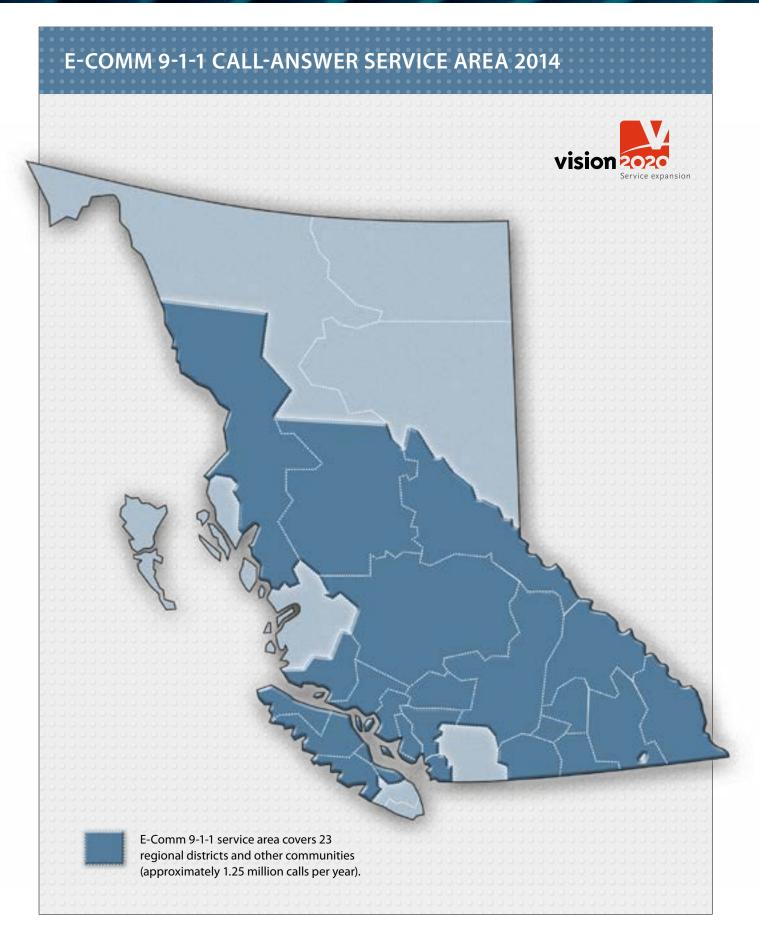
In 2014 we were proud to partner with PRIMECorp to provide technical support for the PRIME-BC police records management system. We have been collaborating on initiatives to enhance both security and service to police agencies throughout the year, specifically, optimizing the province-wide infrastructure and support model for PRIME-BC, including a number of service improvements.

We were also very proud of a collaborative effort between our technology and operations teams for developing a new in-house voice records management system that, in its first year of operation, cut processing times for producing critical voice records for our partner agencies by 80%, despite an incredible 166% growth in requests over the years. This is an example of the ingenuity and teamwork displayed by our staff in their pursuit to provide service excellence to our partners.

We have also made enhancements to our own service desk model to improve service to our 9-1-1, radio and dispatch partners, recognizing that secure, reliable and durable systems are paramount to both responder and public safety. The changes we implemented in 2014 have set the stage for increased efficiency, increased hours of operation and faster resolution of issues.

We continued to support efforts aimed at improved radio interoperability and capability across Canada. Our staff led workshops at the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Information & Communications Technology Workshop on 700 MHz broadband spectrum and location-based technologies for public safety organizations, and on NG9-1-1. This included a close look at how system changes are currently being delivered, as well as future capabilities such as improved wireless call location data and the transition to Internet Protocol data communications for 9-1-1 service delivery.





#### Our expansion & leadership

In October and November, 9-1-1 call-answer services for the northern, central and southern interiors and northern Vancouver Island successfully transitioned to E-Comm, making the emergency communications centre the first point of contact for 80% of B.C.'s 9-1-1 calls. The changeovers occurred seamlessly, with first calls, in all cases, coming in just minutes after the official cutovers. All were successfully transferred to local emergency dispatchers.

Between the three transitions, 19 regional districts joined E-Comm, with a combined annual call volume of more than 360,000 calls per year and a combined service area of 330,000 square kilometres.

Preparations for the transitions began months prior. More than 280 hours of training were dedicated to familiarizing E-Comm staff with the geography and special attributes of the regional districts, including commonplace names. A comprehensive pre-transition test call schedule was also developed, in which hundreds of calls were made from both cellular and landline phones originating from a variety of locations across each of the transitioning regional districts.

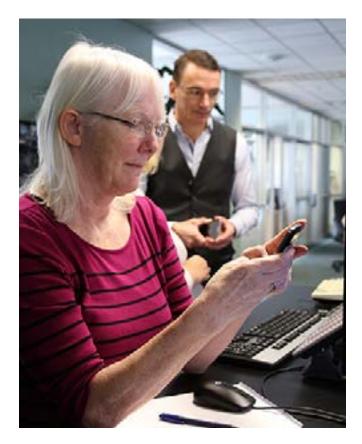
We're proud to share our large team of experienced 9-1-1 staff, our technology and purpose-built facility with our new partners and the residents of these regional districts and are committed to providing them with exceptional service.

"A phenomenal job was done in transitioning our 9-1-1 call-answer from the RCMP to the excellent care and service of E-Comm staff and facilities."

Al Richmond, Chair, Cariboo Regional District







"To be able to reach this lifeline through a cell phone is a major improvement over the current technology we have been using."

Janice Lyons, Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

On March 18th, members of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard-of-Hearing and Speech-Impaired (DHHSI) communities in Metro Vancouver became the first in Canada to be able to text with 9-1-1 (T9-1-1) after E-Comm launched this specialized service. T9-1-1 means that any DHHSI person within the E-Comm service area who pre-registers their cell phone with their wireless provider can contact emergency services and communicate via special text messages. T9-1-1 must first be initiated through a voice call, which triggers an alert for calltakers to begin texting with the caller.

This new service is a significant improvement to the previous TTY system that is limited to landlines, although E-Comm will continue to accept 9-1-1 calls through TTY.

On May 30th, E-Comm facilitated the first hazardous materials tabletop exercise that was focused solely on communications. Representatives from various fire, police, ambulance and regional agencies, including E-Comm, gathered at Coquitlam Fire/Rescue to participate in a tabletop crisis scenario



modeled after 2013's train derailment in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. Multi-agency collaboration was the main topic of discussion during the exercise, as participants reviewed the emergency planning and preparedness activities necessary during a large-scale disaster.

A number of E-Comm's operational managers were on hand to offer their perspectives on call volume management for 9-1-1, fire and police call-taking, as well as dispatch. This included discussion of issues relating to location information, technology requirements and multiagency coordination.

The exercise was considered a success, with many important lessons learned. E-Comm will continue to take a leadership role in developing future exercise scenarios.

Public education and community outreach continued to be priorities for E-Comm in 2014. We were proud to participate in 23 community events throughout the Lower Mainland, alongside our partners. We also continued with our educational efforts to support understanding and awareness of 9-1-1, with two campaigns in 2014. In the first, we highlighted the ongoing issue of accidental calls-most often "pocket dials" from cell phones. The campaign was centered on a whimsical animated video that has been viewed more than 215,000 times. We launched a second campaign in the fall—Don't Let Non-Emergencies Compete With Real Ones—which also included a compelling video that has been viewed more than 170,000 times and a new URL (nonemergency.ca), providing helpful information and non-emergency numbers. The new page was visited more than 9,000 times.



# 2014 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Statement of Operations and Deficit**

	2014	2013
Revenue	49,274,149	48,227,891
Direct operating expenses	42,064,789	36,279,556
	7,209,360	11,948,335
Other expenses		
Amortization and other	3,927,668	8,032,167
Interest expense	2,615,251	3,256,930
	6,542,919	11,289,097
Excess of revenue over expenses	666,441	659,238
Deficit, beginning of year	(757,457)	(1,416,695)
Deficit, end of year	(91,016)	(757,457)

E-Comm's overall financial results are favourable for the 2014 fiscal year, with a surplus of \$666K related to dispatch operations. This is primarily due to ancillary revenues from various technology-related contracts, as well as increased 9-1-1 revenues from the transition of three 9-1-1 PSAP agencies (Regional District of Central Okanagan, North Island 9-1-1 Corporation and Regional District of Fraser-Fort George). Most shareholders (radio members) received rebates on their shared levies of an average of 3.8%.

The average levy increases for 2015 are either in line with or better than the prior year Strategic Financial Plan estimates. The average agency radio levy decrease is 0.7% and continues to move us forward with a planned and sustainable means of funding the Next Generation Radio Program (NGRP). The average fire dispatch levy increase for 2015 is 3.0% as planned, while the average police dispatch levy is 2.3%, which is lower than the previously approved Strategic Financial Plan estimates. This is due largely to the significant growth in Operations, resulting in net financial efficiencies for all police dispatch partners, and, like radio, demonstrating the financial benefits of consolidation and economies of scale.

E-Comm's current radio network infrastructure requires a capital refresh starting in 2015, as it will be phased out and replaced by new infrastructure as part of the NGRP. The total NGRP program (net of 2013 and 2014 reserve funding) is estimated to range between \$60M and \$65M over the period 2014–2018/19 and will replace all E-Comm wide-area radio network equipment and some radio site infrastructure components. The Board of Directors approved expenditures of \$1.7M for the year ending December 31, 2014 related to the work on the NGRP to fund one-time planning, procurement and related costs. A total of \$1.4M has been incurred for the NGRP during the 2014 year and has been drawn down from radio reserves.

E-Comm is well-positioned to move forward financially and remains on track for eliminating the accumulated deficit in 2015, related to early years losses in dispatch, while continuing to place a strong emphasis on technical, operational and organizational efficiency and effectiveness to maximize the overall value that E-Comm provides.

To obtain full copies of E-Comm's 2014 Audited Financial Statements, including the Auditor's Report to the Shareholders and Notes to the Financial Statements, please visit **ecomm911.ca**.

# 2014-2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A 19-member Board of Directors provides governance to E-Comm and is responsible for overseeing the Corporation's strategic direction, finances and operating results.

Jocelyn Kelley	Independent Director, Chair of the Board		
Dr. Penny Ballem	Representing City of Vancouver		
Gary Bass	Representing RCMP		
Doug Campbell	Independent Director		
Mayor Mike Clay	Representing Independent Police Boards - West Vancouver, Port Moody, New Westminster, Abbotsford, Transit Police		
Ernie Daykin	Representing City of Maple Ridge and City of Pitt Meadows		
Councillor Diana Dilworth	Representing City of Coquitlam, City of Port Moody, City of Port Coquitlam, City of Ne Westminster, Village of Belcarra		
Barry Forbes	Independent Director		
Len Garis	Representing City of Surrey, City of White Rock, Township of Langley		
Councillor Bill Lawrence	Representing City of Surrey, City of White Rock, Township of Langley		
Linda Lupini	Representing BC Emergency Health Services		
Councillor Gayle Martin	Representing Metro Vancouver (GVRD)		
Councillor Bill McNulty	Representing City of Richmond		
Mayor Darrell Mussatto	Representing District of West Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, City of North Vancouver, Village of Lions Bay		
Clayton Pecknold	Representing Ministry of Justice		
Karl Preuss	Representing Corporation of Delta		
Pat Quealey	Representing Ministry of Justice		
Bob Rolls	Representing Vancouver Police Board		
Sheldon Stoilen	Independent Director		

### Executive Leadership Team

David Guscott	President & CEO
Beatrix Nicolato, CPA, CGA	Vice-President & Chief Financial Officer
Doug Watson	Vice-President of Operations
Michael Webb, P.Eng	Vice-President of Technology Services
Fraser MacRae	Director of Police Services
Dave Mitchell	Director of Fire Services
Erin Ramsay	Director of Human Resources
Jody Robertson	Director of Corporate Communications & Corporate Secretary

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