



**E-Comm 9-1-1**  
2023 Transformation Progress Update  
February 2024

## **INTRODUCTION**

In November 2022, the E-Comm 9-1-1 Board of Directors approved a comprehensive new transformation plan and budget, to modernize and put our operations on a solid foundation for the future. The five-year plan is intended to address long-standing challenges in our operations, and in every part of our organization, by providing – for the first time – dedicated funding, staff and capacity to implement needed improvements. A primary focus is on stabilizing and improving our call-taking and dispatch services for our police agency partners.

This update is intended to inform our local government and agency partners, and the public we all serve, of our progress in our first year of implementing the plan, the positive results to date and our focus on continuing to make improvements for the benefit of the public, our partners and our people.

## **2023 IN BRIEF – A YEAR OF SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS**

2023 has been a year of significant improvements and progress in the transformation of every aspect of our operations and services. We are turning the corner from past challenges in our operations, staffing and service levels, and achieved our best service levels in the last five years in the key areas of 9-1-1 and police emergency call taking.

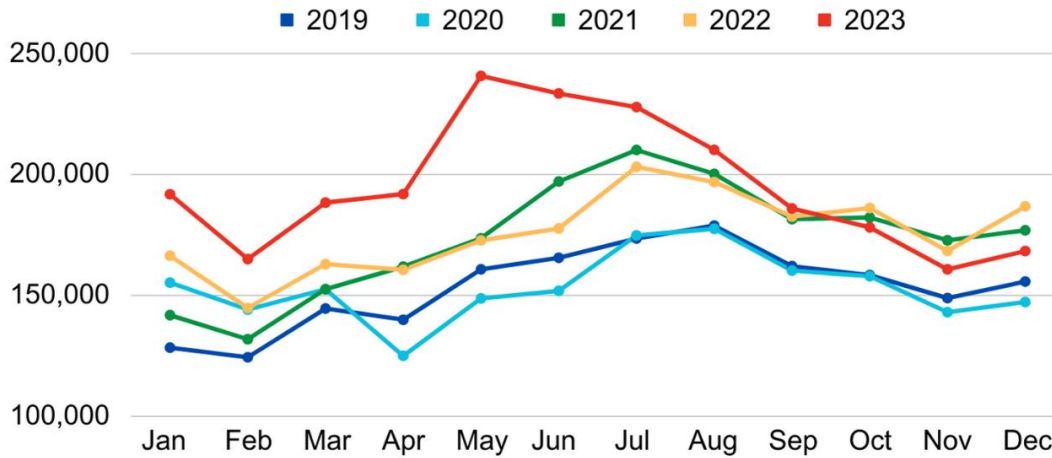
We have also begun to implement improvements, detailed below, in our people and culture supports, as well as technology and corporate capabilities, that will further strengthen our operations for the future.

## **THE NEED FOR CHANGE**

Like our public safety counterparts around the world, E-Comm is facing challenges that require us to re-evaluate how we deliver our services, including: significant growth in 9-1-1 call volumes, driven by a growing and ageing population and the adoption of smartphones and call-enabled devices; acute shortages of qualified staff; and increased technology costs to keep pace with advances in how calls are managed. Other factors include more frequent and larger-scale climate emergencies, the opioid overdose crisis, a homeless challenge and mental health-related incidents.

An independent review conducted in 2021 by PwC Canada, and in which representatives of our police agency partners participated, concluded E-Comm was understaffed by approximately 125 front-line operations positions. It identified operational inefficiencies, gaps in key capabilities, and needed technology improvements. Importantly, PwC also warned that the future cost of attaining service level targets would be unsupportable not just in terms of money, but also securing sufficient staff, if our existing operations and technology were not modernized.

**Total B.C. 9-1-1 calls up 11% in 2023**



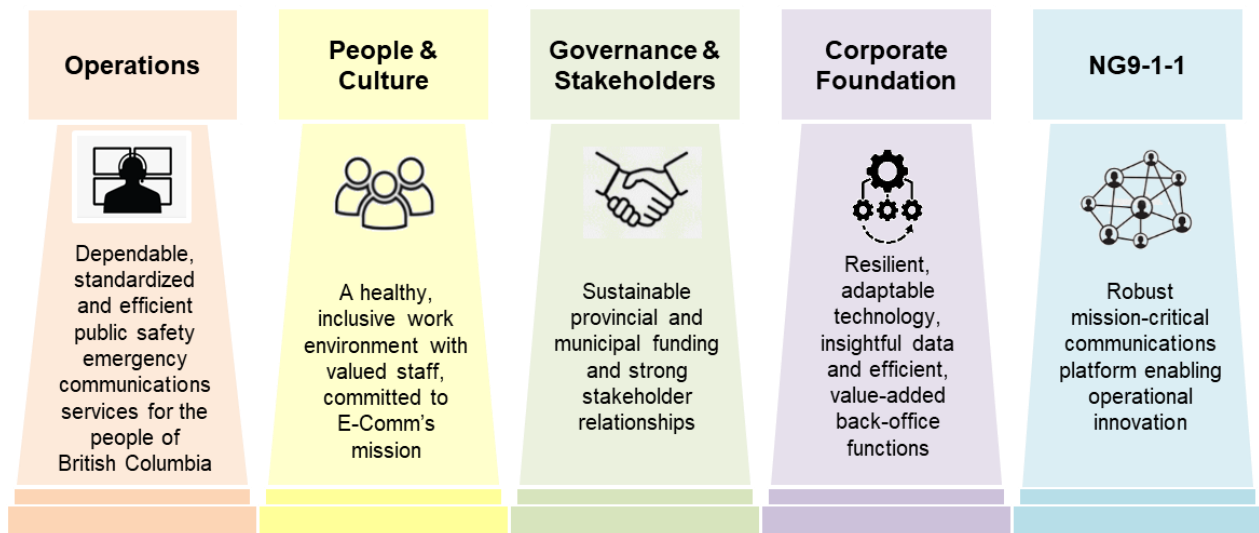
**OVERALL OBJECTIVES – SUSTAINABLE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS**

In response to these pressures, the transformation plan is focussed on three core outcomes:

1. achieve service level targets and improve public experience;
2. build a sustainable organization; and
3. stabilize financials and have predictable, consistent cost-to-serve.

The plan addresses five strategic pillars: Operations; People and Culture; Governance and Stakeholders; Corporate Foundation; and Next Generation 9-1-1. Objectives of each are summarized in the infographic. More information at: [www.ecomm911.ca/transformation-plan](http://www.ecomm911.ca/transformation-plan).

**Transformation Plan objectives**



## PROGRESS ON SERVICE LEVELS

As a result of improvements begun in 2023, service levels are strengthening:

- **Best 9-1-1 service levels in 5 years** – Despite a significant 11% increase in 9-1-1 call volumes in 2023, E-Comm’s service level for 9-1-1 call taking exceeded target (95% of calls answered within 5 seconds), at 98% provincewide. We are delivering consistent, reliable 9-1-1 service to the citizens of British Columbia.
- **Best Lower Mainland police emergency (ER) service levels in five years** – E-Comm’s 2023 service levels for police emergency call-taking were above target (88% of calls answered within 10 seconds) in the Lower Mainland for the first time in five years, at 89%, and on target on Vancouver Island.
- **Significantly improved Lower Mainland police non-emergency (NER) service levels** – Year-end police NER results remained on target on Vancouver Island (80% of calls answered within 3 minutes), and significantly improved in the Lower Mainland at 63%, up from 44% in 2022.
- **Reduction in Lower Mainland NER abandoned call rates** – Our 2023 abandoned call rate for police NER calls over 3 minutes was 13% in the Lower Mainland, down from 26% in 2022; and 6% on Vancouver Island, the same as in 2022. Our Lower Mainland average speed to answer improved to 4 minutes from almost 11 minutes in 2022, and we answered 61,000 more calls.
- **Best fire emergency (ER) service levels in five years** – Likewise, E-Comm’s 2023 service levels for fire emergency call-taking were above target (90% of calls answered within 15 seconds), and the highest in five years.

**Lower Mainland Service Levels**

	Target	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>9-1-1</b>	95%/5s	97%	98%	92%	98%	98%
<b>Police Emergency</b>	88%/10s	81%	86%	83%	85%	89%
<b>Police Non-Emergency</b>	80%/180s	61%	67%	55%	44%	63%
<b>Fire Emergency</b>	90%/15s	87%	92%	90%	88%	93%

**Vancouver Island Service Levels**

	Target	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>9-1-1</b>	95%/5s	97%	98%	92%	98%	98%
<b>Police Emergency</b>	88%/10s	79%	88%	90%	88%	88%
<b>Police Non-Emergency</b>	80%/180s	68%	81%	87%	79%	80%

**IMPROVEMENTS TO POLICE NON-EMERGENCY CALL TAKING**

- Dedicated police NER call takers** – Until now, most non-emergency calls were answered by police call takers who also answered emergency calls. Because call takers must prioritize emergency calls when volumes increase, non-emergency service levels deteriorate. In response, E-Comm has created a dedicated non-emergency call-taker role, with recruitment of 36 positions completed in 2023. This role recognizes the different skill-sets required for handling emergency versus non-emergency calls, and opens up a larger pool of potential candidates. These agents now answer over 60% of all NER calls.
- NER Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) harmonization** – We collaborated with our police partners to harmonize SOPs across agencies for the 96 different NER “call types” that we answer, reducing call taking complexity, which will help to improve call-handling times, reduce training time, and strengthen quality assurance.
- Enhancements to online alternatives for reporting NER incidents** – We have also worked with our police partners to improve websites for reporting of NER crimes, as an alternative to NER calls.
- New NER contact centre technology platform to go live in 2024** – Our new Genesys “Contact Centre as a Service” technology platform will further improve the caller experience by enabling wait-time estimates and call-back options, improved call menus and information, and SMS and call-transfer capabilities. It will also help to provide better data on the reasons for calls. This is part of our strategy to use technology to improve the public’s experience.
- Digital agent pilot** – Working with the Vancouver Police Department, E-Comm launched a digital agent pilot in May 2023, using Amelia.ai technology. The intent of this pilot was to gather better data on reasons for calls and help redirect callers to an appropriate agency if the call is not a police non-emergency matter. We will be taking lessons learned from this pilot to develop an overall digital strategy for non-emergency calls, including exploring different ways for the public to report crimes.

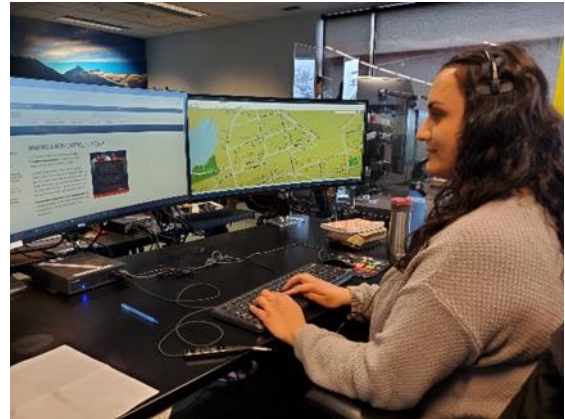
## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO OPERATIONS

- **Ongoing recruitment to improve operations** – We hired over 170 external candidates, to address long-standing gaps, and get staffing levels closer to target.
- **Dedicated 9-1-1 queue agents** – We created a dedicated 9-1-1 operator role to stabilize the 9-1-1 queue, attract more candidates and reduce training time.
- **Improved training** – We implemented training improvements, to help improve employee success and retention by providing better on-the-job supports. These include an expanded “peer coach” training and mentoring program, as well as new training resources for people leaders.
- **Better shift options** – We have also developed alternate shift pattern offerings to allow for better work-life balance and better match staffing to call volumes and workload.

## SUPPORTS FOR OUR PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Other improvements for our people include:

- **Collective bargaining agreement and compensation review** – We concluded a new collective bargaining agreement and compensation review, with market-competitive compensation and benefits to improve our ability to attract and retain great people.
- **Employee wellness supports** – We have implemented new Resilient Minds training and wellness supports, helping to keep our employees healthy and reduce rates of attrition and sick leave. For example, the leave rate for police call takers decreased last year from 17.3% in 2022 to 14.5% in the Lower Mainland, and from 9.4% to 5.7% on Vancouver Island.
- **Performance management framework** – We are implementing a new performance management framework, to improve engagement and feedback for employees.
- **Improved attrition and retention** – The result of these changes is an overall improvement in company-wide attrition rates, to 10.7% in 2023, from 13.6% in 2021. For our Dispatchers, the annual attrition rate was significantly reduced in the past year, from 10.1% in 2022 to 5% in the Lower Mainland, and from 27.6% to 19% on the Island.



## NEXT GENERATION 9-1-1 IMPROVEMENTS

In March 2023, the Province of BC contributed \$90 million to E-Comm, to support the federally-mandated implementation of “Next Generation” 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) technology improvements. The program will move 9-1-1 voice calls to a new digital, IP-based network which is to be completed by March 1, 2025. This one-time funding to support the initial implementation of NG9-1-1 represents a significant avoided cost for our local government and agency partners, and E-Comm is pleased to have played a leadership role in working with the Province and local governments to help enable it.

E-Comm continues to work with governments at all levels, partner agencies, and a national committee of Canadian emergency call-taking agencies to make sure we have the necessary technology, tools, and operational funding in place to be ready for this change. Find out more about NG9-1-1 at: <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/phone/911/gen.htm>

## OTHER TECHNOLOGY AND CORPORATE IMPROVEMENTS

- **Data centre resiliency and cybersecurity projects on track** – We continue work on our new data centre resiliency and cybersecurity projects to strengthen protections against cyber threats and data breaches.
- **Improvements to data analytics to better support our agency partners** – We are implementing significant improvements to automate and enhance our data analytics and reporting to help identify opportunities to improve operations and provide our partners with better data.
- **Comprehensive governance review underway** – We have launched a comprehensive review of our corporate and governance structure to identify opportunities for improvement. We are engaging our local government and agency partners in this review, which is to be completed in 2024.



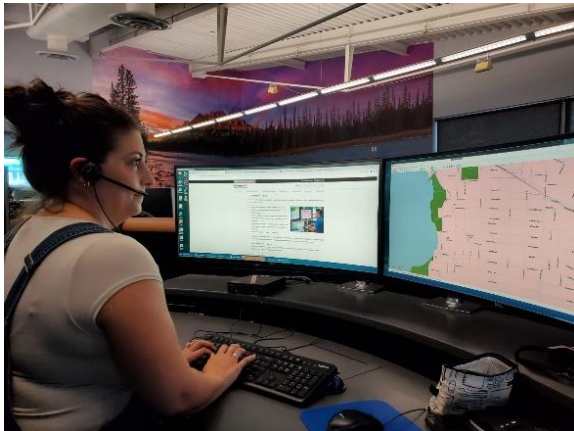
## PROGRESS TOWARDS A NEW PROVINCIAL MANDATE FOR 9-1-1

In September 2023, local governments endorsed a special resolution at the Union of BC Municipalities convention, calling for a new provincial mandate for 9-1-1 services in B.C., including new provincewide service standards, governance model and provincial funding, through a levy on monthly cell phone bills.

E-Comm is very supportive of these efforts to strengthen the governance and funding of 9-1-1 services in B.C., which are currently the responsibility of regional districts. To date, there has been a lack of consistent, provincewide policies and service standards, creating inequities between urban and rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

E-Comm will continue to work with the Province and our local government and agency partners to advance this important priority in 2024.

## **CONCLUSION – LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024**



While E-Comm has made significant improvements and progress in 2023, we recognize that there is still much work to do, and our transformation has only just begun. Challenges remain, including increased call volumes, aging infrastructure and technology, the need for reasonable and predictable costs, ongoing labour shortages, and staffing levels that are still below what's needed in key areas.

As we continue enhancements to our police communication operations, we are also improving our corporate infrastructure, upgrading and leveraging new technologies, and improving the efficiencies of our processes, and focusing on the successful implementation of NG9-1-1, a critical, mandated technological and operational change. We are also working to ensure more sustainable and predictable costs for our partners in 2024. Finally, and most importantly, we will continue to support our people who play such an important role in public safety communication in BC.

We have the plan, the people, the resources and support of our partners to continue the momentum we have begun in 2023. We are grateful to our exceptional staff, and our local government and agency partners, for helping to enable our progress to date. And we look forward to keeping you updated on our progress in 2024.

For more information on any of these initiatives, please contact the E-Comm Public Affairs team at: [communications@ecomm911.ca](mailto:communications@ecomm911.ca).