



December 17, 2021

Honourable Mike Farnworth, MLA
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
PO Box 9010 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2 via email: pssg.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister

Re: Download of costs for RCMP E-Comm 911 Dispatch Calls to South Island Municipalities

It has now been more than a year since we were collectively summoned to a meeting on December 10, 2020 with (then) Assistant Deputy Minister and Director of Police Services Brenda Butterworth-Carr, where we were informed of the pending download of 100 per cent of the costs for RCMP E-Comm 9-1-1 dispatch calls to our municipal budgets. As you know, previous to this, those costs had been covered by senior governments; 70 percent by the Province and 30 percent by Ottawa.

We have been consistent since the December 10th meeting that this file has been poorly handled; that this download is being imposed upon us without any consultation. For example, at the original meeting, Ms. Butterworth-Carr stated that this issue had been discussed at the Local Government Contract Management Committee (LGCMC) - an assertion which she later conceded was incorrect. This issue had never been discussed at any LGCMC meeting or in any other forum where our local governments were represented in the time leading up to the December 10th meeting. With so many policing cost increases to local governments in recent years, including the additional costs related to the new RCMP contract, we trust you can understand why another burden such as the one proposed by downloading the RCMP E-Comm 9-1-1 dispatch costs is untenable.

Minister Farnworth, the reality is that this download constitutes a major financial burden for our communities, even with the proposed three-year phase-in. Based on the numbers provided to us in a communique from your Ministry on March 25, 2021, we have compiled a brief table of the tax increase impacts this download will have in each of our jurisdictions.

Location	Projected Costs 2022	Tax Increase 2022	Projected Cost 2023	Tax Increase 2023	Projected Cost 2024	Tax Increase 2024	Total Tax Increase
Colwood	\$82,600	0.51%	\$131,600	0.75%	\$197,300	1.04%	2.30%
Ladysmith	\$48,900	0.50%	\$110,500	0.70%	\$177,000	0.70%	1.90%
Langford	\$243,000	0.74%	\$630,750	1.18%	\$1,064,500	1.31%	3.23%
North Cowichan	\$147,000	0.46%	\$380,500	0.73%	\$642,250	0.81%	2.00%
North Saanich	\$67,000	0.62%	\$152,000	0.78%	\$244,000	0.84%	2.24%
Sidney	\$92,000	0.75%	\$207,000	0.90%	\$333,000	0.93%	2.58%
Sooke	\$60,000	0.65%	\$155,000	1.03%	\$261,000	1.16%	2.84%
View Royal	\$54,750	0.56%	\$142,750	0.91%	\$257,500	1.18%	2.65%

As you can see from the table above, in our eight impacted South Island municipalities, the download will amount to an average tax increase of just under 2.5 percent by the time it is fully implemented. In the context of other financial pressures we are facing, this will place many of our jurisdictions in a position of potentially having to forego additional policing resources in our communities. This comes at a time when the public pressures for us to *increase* those resources continue to grow due to a variety of issues, including escalating street disorder brought on by the opioid crisis. This is why this letter is coming to you with the unanimous authorization/endorsement of our respective Municipal Councils.

Since that meeting just over a year ago, and despite numerous discussions with Wayne Rideout and other staff at the Ministry, there has been zero progress in finding any solution to address our concerns. We now find ourselves at the eleventh hour, starting our 2022 budget processes amid ongoing uncertainty on this issue. In spite of repeated assurances from your staff that “something could be worked out,” we are essentially in exactly the same place today as we were at the start of this process; the first phase of the download is still set to take effect on the first day of your 2022 fiscal year.

We are also very disappointed that our South Island Dispatch region is being unfairly singled out for this download. Many other Dispatch regions in the province continue to benefit from the 70/30 provincial/federal split of E-Comm costs. In this regard, despite repeated requests of your staff, (including a request from UBCM), we have not been provided a list of the other municipalities in the province to whom you are not downloading these costs at this time. It remains our position that singling out our Dispatch region without taking a province-wide approach is patently unfair to us, and more importantly, to our property taxpayers. To that end, we would respectfully request that if this download goes ahead, it be applied equally to all jurisdictions which continue to benefit from the 70/30 funding formula.

Minister Farnworth, each of us is now in the process of finalizing our budgets for 2022. This is creating some new urgency for us; we need to have some certainty on this file, and we would implore the Province, at minimum, to agree to a one-year deferral on the implementation of any phase-in of this download to allow more time for this issue to be fulsomely discussed at the LGCMC, where it properly belongs. In those discussions, it would be our goal to arrive at a longer phase-in window and do so on a province-wide basis. This approach would conceivably create a net benefit for the Province as well in that while the phase-in would be longer, the ultimate result over the long term would be a larger saving

to the Provincial treasury. To that end, we would request extending the phase-in from three to 7-10 years.

Our ultimate wish, of course, is that the pre-existing condition wherein E-Comm costs in all Dispatch regions were covered by senior governments would continue. However, we concede that this is likely an unrealistic expectation. We need time for proper discussions to occur at LGCMC over the next year to arrive at an acceptable agreement and to properly procure the most cost effective and value based 9-1-1 service delivery for our South Island communities.

Therefore, we are formally requesting that you:

1. Reconsider the timeline of the first "phase" of this download and that it be delayed - at a minimum - by one year to take effect starting in fiscal 2023.
2. Forward this file to the LGCMC for further discussion, with the negotiations there to be centred on the notion of applying this download equally to all Dispatch jurisdictions that are currently benefiting from the 70/30 split,
3. That the phase-in of the download be extended from three years to a longer period of time to allow local governments sufficient time to more gradually absorb the costs inherent in this file.

Minister Farnworth, we acknowledge these are challenging times, and we are all truly appreciative of the pressures under which you have been operating in recent months; pressures brought on by forest fires and then by flooding. These are undoubtedly huge files for you to handle in your role as the Minister of Public Safety. We also acknowledge that these pressures are compounded by your newly-appointed role as Deputy Premier. We certainly don't wish to add to the pressure you are facing, but this file is critical to us, to our budget-setting processes, and ultimately to our taxpayers.

We would also request another meeting with you early in the New Year, ideally in person, to discuss the specifics of this letter.

Until then, thank you for your attention to this matter:

Sincerely



Mayor Rob Martin
City of Colwood



Mayor Aaron Stone
Town of Ladysmith



Mayor Stew Young
City of Langford



Mayor Al Siebring
District of North Cowichan



Mayor Geoff Orr
District of North Saanich



Mayor Cliff McNeil-Smith
Town of Sidney



Mayor Maja Tait
District of Sooke



Mayor David Screech
Town of View Royal

cc: Honourable John Horgan, Premier, MLA Langford-Juan de Fuca
Honourable Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance
Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety
Honourable Josie Osborne, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Lisa Marie Barron, MP, Nanaimo-Ladysmith
Mitzi Dean, MLA, Esquimalt-Metchosin
Sonia Fursteneau, MLA, Cowichan Valley
Randall Garrison, MP, Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke
Craig Hodge, Co-chair, Local Government Contract Management Committee
Mayor Leonard Krog, City of Nanaimo
Elizabeth May, MP, Saanich-Gulf Islands
Alistair McGregor, MP, Cowichan-Malahat-Langford
Mike Morris, MLA, Opposition Critic for Public Safety and Solicitor General
Adam Olsen, MLA, Saanich North and the Islands
Wayne Rideout, Co-chair, LGCMC and Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Safety & Director of Police Services
Laurey-Anne Roodenburg, President, Union of BC Municipalities
Doug Routley, MLA, North Cowichan-Nanaimo
Bhar Sihota, Senior Policy Analyst, Union of BC Municipalities
Mayor Michelle Staples, City of Duncan