



January 28, 2025

Honourable Garry Begg, MLA  
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
PO Box 9010 Stn Prov Gov  
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Via email: [pssg.minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:pssg.minister@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Minister

**Re: Inequitable download of police dispatch costs to South Island municipal taxpayers**

We, the mayors of 10 South Island municipalities, are writing to express our strong opposition and profound dissatisfaction with the impending download of police dispatch costs to our communities' taxpayers. Starting April 1, 2025, this decision will impose a significant financial burden, translating to a minimum property tax increase of between 2.7% and 6% for each municipality. This is untenable and unacceptable unless these costs are applied equally across British Columbia, phased in appropriately, and accompanied by demonstrable value from E-Comm's dispatch services.

At the 2024 UBCM convention, then Minister Farnworth implied that our concerns would be addressed and that we would not face these costs in 2025. However, we now find ourselves confronting the same unresolved issue despite years of advocacy and discussion.

**Background**

Historically, RCMP-policed South Island municipalities received dispatch services through the Provincial Operational Communications Centre (OCC) at the West Shore Detachment. Costs were fully covered under a 70/30 funding model between the Province and the federal government.

Starting in 2014, the Province collaborated with local law enforcement jurisdictions to consolidate dispatch services for the Capital Region and the South Island and selected E-Comm as the service provider. However, this transition occurred without consultation, transparency, or awareness of the financial repercussions for member municipalities. The original funding model

was expected to remain unchanged, as confirmed in a 2021 letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister and Director of Police Services to the Municipality of North Cowichan :

*"There was no discussion during this period of time around any changes to the funding model for telecommunications. At the time, the RCMP did not raise cost implications as a forthcoming issue when the service provider changed. Both the Province and RCMP Westshore were under the impression that the provision of South Island police dispatch services would continue to be provided at the 70/30 Provincial/Federal cost share."*

South Island municipalities only became aware of the financial impact after the transition. Since 2021, we have worked collectively to push back against this inequitable cost downloading, which successfully delayed implementation through March 31, 2025. Despite this, **the Province has not:**

- Consulted with South Island municipalities;
- Explored alternative funding models;
- Addressed the inconsistencies and inequities between regions across B.C.; or,
- Introduced a telecommunications levy to fund a new provincial 9-1-1 model, as seen in other provinces.

### **Financial impacts:**

The projected cost of E-Comm dispatch services for the nine months from April to December 2025 is \$4.9 million for the 10 impacted municipalities, escalating to a full 12 months in 2026. For each municipality, this cost alone represents a property tax increase of at least 2.7% to 6%, compounding other financial pressures from inflation, aging infrastructure, increased service expectations, new provincial mandates around housing, and ongoing downloaded costs associated with the opioid epidemic.

This inequity is further exacerbated by the fact that other OCCs in B.C. continue to receive full funding. Maintaining the original OCC would have been considered a viable option if these financial implications had been made clear during the initial transition.

We are pleased that you have committed to reviewing this service; however our request is to maintain status quo while this review is undertaken and to consider the following.

### **Our request**

To address this inequity and support our municipalities, we urge the Province to:

1. **Maintain 100% transitional funding** until the E-Comm review is complete and actionable solutions are implemented.
2. **Address the funding inequity** between South Island municipalities and other jurisdictions, ensuring consistent and fair treatment across B.C.
3. **Introduce a telecommunications levy** to offset 9-1-1 dispatch costs and align with funding models in other provinces.

4. **Engage in meaningful consultation** with our 10 South Island municipalities on this issue.

As we finalize our 2025 budgets, this looming download creates an unjust and inequitable financial burden on our communities and property taxpayers. The Province has the means to rectify this inequity and support our requests.

We respectfully assert that these downloaded costs are unacceptable without implementing the above measures.

Sincerely,



Mayor Kobayashi  
City of Colwood



Mayor Staples  
City of Duncan



Acting Mayor McKay  
Town of Ladysmith



Mayor Goodmanson  
City of Langford



Mayor Little  
Town of Metchosin



Mayor Douglas  
Municipality of North Cowichan



Mayor Jones  
District of North Saanich



Mayor McNeil-Smith  
Town of Sidney



Mayor Tait  
District of Sooke



Mayor Tobias  
Town of View Royal

cc: Honourable David Eby, Premier  
Honourable Brenda Bailey, Minister of Finance  
Honourable Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs and MLA, Langford-Highlands  
Rob Botterell, MLA, Saanich North and the Islands  
Stephanie Higginson, MLA, Ladysmith-Oceanside  
Dana Lajeunesse, MLA, Juan de-Fuca-Malahat  
Darlene Rotchford, MLA, Esquimalt-Colwood  
Debra Toporowski -Qwulti'stunaat, MLA, Cowichan Valley  
Allison McCarrick, CAO, Town of Ladysmith  
Bob Payette, CAO, District of Metchosin  
Darren Kiedyk, CAO, City of Langford  
Jason Johnson, CAO, City of Colwood  
Liam Edwards, CAO, Town of Sidney  
Peter De Verteuil, CAO, City of Duncan  
Raechel Gray, CAO, District of Sooke  
Scott Sommerville, CAO, Town of View Royal  
Stephanie Munro, CAO, District of North Saanich  
Ted Swabey, CAO, Municipality of North Cowichan

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