

Establishing Canada's Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network Not-For-Profit Governance Entity: A Critical Step for National Emergency Preparedness

A Public Safety Broadband Network with secure high-speed wireless data communications designed to enable cross-jurisdictional, cross-government, and cross-agency interoperable communication, Voice and Data, for frontline responders. This is a must have now!

BACKGROUND

Public safety and emergency communications around the world are in a state of transition. With new technologies emerging, the public safety community needs access to up-to-date communications capabilities to ensure that they can protect Canadians and themselves.

In Canada, first responders and other stakeholders have been working towards the goal of a reliable, modern, nationwide and interoperable public safety broadband network (PSBN). A PSBN is a network that can be used by emergency responders and public safety personnel to communicate with each other, share and access information during day-to-day operations, weather-related incidents and natural disasters, emergencies and major events.

The benefits of a PSBN are far reaching and include enhancing emergency prevention and response; improving community safety; addressing the growing need for data transmission particularly in the context of Next Generation 9-1-1; providing a solution for current interoperability challenges; complementing Canada's National Public Alerting System; and broader socioeconomic impacts. The delivery of PSBN services also supports Priority 4 of the Emergency Management Strategy for Canada: Toward a Resilient 2030, which seeks to enhance disaster response capacity and coordination and foster the development of new capabilities.

In May 2018, Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for Emergency Management collectively acknowledged the benefits of a PSBN in Canada and endorsed the establishment of a Temporary National Coordination Office (TNCO).

In June 2020, the TNCO concluded its two-year mandate to develop a national approach to advance a potential Canadian PSBN and presented its report to F/P/T governments for consideration. The report outlines several recommendations regarding a governance approach, guiding principles, service delivery, approaches to achieving robust coverage and capacity, and suggests next steps for advancing a PSBN.

Public Safety Canada led a consultation on the potential governance model in 2024. In 2025 they published a paper titled "What we Heard". The paper confirms that a PSBN is needed now. The models for governance were similar with variations for a Not-For-Profit entity being created or a less supported, a new government entity being created to provide oversight.

TIME TO ACT IS NOW

Canada lacks a national not-for-profit governance authority to oversee the development and operation of a Public Safety Broadband Network (PSBN). Without this entity, Canada cannot fully modernize emergency communications or ensure interoperability across jurisdictions. The time for the federal government to act is now. We are asking for approval and funding to immediately create a PSBN Not-For-Profit (NFP) Governance Entity. This will allow the NFP PSBN governance board to start the work of setting up the nationwide network without further delay.

All three major network operators in Canada have signaled they are ready to deploy a PSBN. The National Tri-Service Public Safety Associations (Police, Fire, EMS) are aligned and in agreement there is an immediate need for an NFP PSBN Governance Entity to be created now.

Summary Points

READY TO CREATE GOVERNANCE ENTITY

- Spectrum for the PSBN has been allocated.
- National consultations were completed in 2024.
- The Temporary National Coordination Office recommended models for a governance authority in 2022.
- Model Two: Shared Public Safety-Commercial Network with distinct network cores.
- First responders across Canada continue to face interoperability challenges during major incidents.

WHY ACTION IS NEEDED NOW

- Increasing frequency and severity of wildfires, floods, and extreme weather events.
- Growing reliance on data rich emergency technologies (video, sensors, NG911).
- Canada is falling behind international peers.
- Governance is the final missing piece — technology and spectrum are ready.

BENEFITS

- Improved responder safety
- Faster, more coordinated emergency response
- Enhanced resilience for rural, remote, and Indigenous communities
- Economic benefits through infrastructure investment
- Alignment with the Emergency Management Strategy for Canada

PROPOSED SOLUTION

A National Not-For-Profit PSBN Governance Entity with responsibility for:

- Network oversight and standards
- Interoperability and security
- Procurement and partnerships
- Provincial, Municipal, and Indigenous engagement
- Long term sustainability and accountability

AUTHORIZE PUBLIC SAFETY CANADA

- The federal government can immediately authorize Public Safety Canada to fund and support the start-up and immediate operation of a PSBN Not-For-Profit governance entity.

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