

Canada Moves Forward with Nationwide NG911 Implementation

Jeff Winbourne, President International Markets, for Winbourne Consulting recently interviewed Holly Barkwell about the implementation of NG911 in Canada. Holly serves as the current NENA Canadian Region Director.

Winbourne: *What is the status of NG911 implementation in Canada? Is the implementation directed from Ottawa?*

Holly: Yes, the implementation is directed from Ottawa. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is the federal regulatory agency for broadcasting and telecommunications in Canada. In 2017, the CRTC published a regulatory policy decision 2017-182 to update the state of 9-1-1 in Canada. The decision was drafted after a national consultation process with citizens, public safety practitioners, and other interested parties. The decision set out some objectives and aggressive timelines. Specifically, that;

- Telecommunications Service Providers (TSPs) make their networks ready to support NG9-1-1 Voice by June 30, 2020
- Mobile wireless service providers provide RTT-based NG9-1-1 text messages by December 31, 2020
- ILECs are to decommission their current 9-1-1 network components that will not form part of their NG9-1-1 networks by 30 June, 2023

Winbourne: *What is the role of the CRTC?*

Holly: The CRTC has no oversight over public safety or agencies, they only regulate telecommunications service providers. Therefore, to help drive the migration to Next Gen 9-1-1 they have directed carriers to take a number of actions to support the rollout. An example is setting the deadline to decommission the analog voice network by June 30, 2023. Agencies have no choice but to migrate.

Winbourne : *Is there a specific timeline?*

Holly: Yes. 9-1-1 service providers are to have their IP voice networks in place by June 30, 2020, and they are to be ready to support RTT texting by Dec 31, 2020. This is to allow time for national trials and early adopters to onboard first with the remaining PSAPs following.

Winbourne: *Is each carrier involved or only one?*

Holly: Each province and territory in Canada has a single 9-1-1 service provider and multiple TSPs. All carriers and TSPs must comply.

Winbourne: *What have been the main challenges?*

Holly: The idea is to create an environment encouraging a coordinated national rollout within the timeframes set out in decision 2017-182. The main challenges encountered so far are convincing the PSAP community to get started with planning and budgeting, and providing realistic cost estimates so agencies can approach local government for funding.

We are now about 3 and 1/2 years from the June 30, 2023 deadline and we have approximately 292 PSAPs to transition. Getting everyone over the finish line in time will be a challenge.

Winbourne: *How is the implementation paid for?*

Holly: It depends on the province. Some provinces have legislation in place to collect a 9-1-1 levy to support 9-1-1 and some do not. For provinces that do, PSAPs receive funding from the province based on a series of criteria including population served. For provinces that do not have levies in place, PSAPs must approach local government for funding. This makes the timeline critical for those provinces because the budget window is already closing for 2020.

Winbourne: *What lessons can you pass on to your colleagues in the United States?*

Holly: Start planning now. Educate local government and build reserves if you are able. NG is expensive and has different and higher maintenance and operating costs than the traditional analog network (not including carrier service fees, etc.).

Look at states such as California which just passed legislation to fund the transition to NG.

And finally, don't forget about the impact of GIS on NG9-1-1 services. GIS systems and services will play an integral role in the NG environment for call routing and for delivery of response services.

Winbourne Consulting interviewed Holly Barkwell about the implementation of NG911 in Canada. Holly is the President & CEO of Barkwell Holland Group Inc. She serves as the current NENA Canadian Region Director. Holly is also an active participant in the Canadian Emergency Services Working Group (ESWG), a dedicated national group of public safety professionals working to transition the country to NG9-1-1 by June 2023. She has a wide ranging emergency communications background, working with multiple provincial and local governments across Canada and the U.S., and on emergency communications projects in Malaysia and Indonesia for those governments.