

Dear Red Deerians,

We want to speak directly to you about Emergency Services staffing in our city. Let us be clear: The City of Red Deer is not compromising your safety. We continue to deliver exceptional emergency response, meeting our longstanding established target of arriving within 10 minutes, 90% of the time for all reported structure fires.

Until now, we have not publicly responded to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 1190, also known as the Red Deer Firefighters Association. This union is made up of City employees, and we value the work they do. Like the union, we believe every second counts. And every dollar counts too. That is why we have chosen not to engage in a costly public labour dispute using taxpayer money. We will not spend taxpayer money on advertisements or lawn signs. Instead, we are sharing facts, statistics, and information on our website as we continue to be transparent and responsive to our community while working through ongoing labour negotiations with the union. Arbitration with the union is scheduled for 2026.

Why dynamic staffing?

Action was required in 2025 to reduce overtime costs. In 2024, overtime in Emergency Services totaled more than \$3.2 million - the highest per capita in Alberta. Comparable Alberta cities with similar population and staffing levels spend less than \$1 million annually. These costs were continuing to climb and placing significant pressure on property taxes. Here is what that means for you as a taxpayer: every \$1.5 million in budget changes equals about a 1% increase in property taxes.

During the 2025 budget process, City Council faced difficult decisions – decisions that are not made by one individual, but by Council as a whole, informed by administration, debated in open meetings, and weighed against all community needs. Emergency Services funding currently makes up approximately 17% of the City's overall budget, representing a significant investment in emergency services and community safety. To limit unsustainable overtime costs while still meeting service targets, Council approved dynamic staffing.

What does dynamic staffing mean?

Dynamic staffing is designed to be flexible and is applied only when employees call in last minute and cannot work their scheduled shift. When it happens, four or more firefighters are still dispatched to every fire-related call. In some cases, this means even more resources arrive at your door, spread across two trucks instead of one.

And the results speak for themselves:

- In 2024, there were 1,920 overtime shifts.
- In 2025 to date, there have been 160 overtime shifts - a 90% reduction so far.
- Dynamic staffing has reduced the money spent on overtime by more than \$1 million between January and July 2025.

The bigger picture

Budget pressures are not unique to Emergency Services. Every department is finding ways to meet rising demands with limited resources. Parks crews are cleaning up more encampments than ever before. Police are responding to increasingly complex calls. And at the same time, federal and provincial downloading of responsibilities continues to strain our local budget.

As your local government, we are working hard every day to deliver safe, reliable, and consistent services. Sometimes that means change. Change can be uncomfortable, and it is not always popular, but sometimes it is necessary to keep Red Deer safe, affordable, and sustainable for the long term.

On respect and professionalism

We also want to acknowledge the role of IAFF Local 1190 in advocating for its members. Advocacy is part of their job. However, their current activities - unprofessional billboards and public campaigns - do not change the facts. Even more concerning are personal attacks aimed at our Fire Chief and Deputy Chiefs. It is natural for decisions made by The City to generate both support and criticism in our community; however, it is also important that feedback, regardless of where it comes from, remains respectful. Personal attacks on any City staff are unproductive and will not be tolerated.

Our commitment to you

Dynamic staffing is an overtime reduction strategy. It ensures Red Deer remains safe while your tax dollars are managed responsibly. We encourage all citizens to understand this issue and to find out more.



We support safe staffing, we support our employees, and we support the residents we serve.

Thank you for taking the time to understand this important issue.

Sincerely,

Tara Lodewyk
City Manager, The City of Red Deer

September 5, 2025

Ken Johnston
Mayor, The City of Red Deer

September 5, 2025

Quick Facts: Emergency Services & Dynamic Staffing

More information and facts are posted to The City's website, and updated regularly at www.reddeer.ca/emergencyservices

- **Safety First:** Red Deer Emergency Services continues to provide exceptional emergency response, with crews arriving within established service targets and prioritizing community and employee safety.
 - From January 1 to July 31, 2025, the average response time was approximately 9 minutes and 50 seconds for all call categories (excluding AHS ambulance response).
 - From January 1 to July 31, 2025, the average response time for structure fires was 6 minutes and 48 seconds
 - Alberta Health Services target response time for ambulance (emergency medical response) is 12 minutes. (City has a contract with Alberta Health Services to deliver ambulance until September 2026)
- **Call Volumes:** By the end of July, crews responded to more than 15,500 calls. About 90% of these were medical emergencies.
 - Total: 15,594 calls.
 - Alberta Health Services (Ambulance)EMS: 11,952 (77%).
 - Fire Related Calls: 3,642 (23%).
 - Of the 3,642, 58% are medical, alarms 19%, outside fires 9%, vehicle collisions 5%.
 - Structure fires: 2% of all fire related calls
- **Resources at Your Door:** When Dynamic Staffing is in place, four or more firefighters are dispatched to all fire related calls; in some cases, this means more resources arriving at your door, spread across two trucks instead of one.
- **Overtime Costs:** In 2024, overtime in Red Deer Emergency Services totaled more than \$3.2 million - the highest per capita in Alberta.
 - Dynamic staffing has reduced the money spent on overtime by more than \$1 million between January and July this year.
 - In 2024, there were 1,920 overtime shifts. In 2025, to date, there have been 160 overtime shifts.

- Dynamic staffing has been used 85 times.
- **Tax Impact:** Every \$1.5 million added to the budget equals about a 1% property tax increase. Reversing Dynamic Staffing would result in additional tax increases over and above what is already expected, for Emergency Services alone - without increasing service levels.
- **Competitive Pay is Approximately** + benefits & pension (set in collective agreement through bargaining)
 - First-Class Firefighter: \$109,853
 - Captain: \$134,020
 - Platoon Chief: \$148,301.
- **New Temporary Positions:** Following a Letter of Understanding signed in June between The City and the IAFF, The City is now able to hire up to 12 temporary paramedics in EMS-only roles for terms of up to 12 months. This is the first time The City has been able to hire temporary employees to cover leaves. To date, 6 paramedics have been hired, with recruitment underway for the remaining positions.