



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

December 1, 2020

Honourable Jason Kenney
Premier and President of Executive Council
Office of the Premier
Executive Branch
307 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Re: Ambulance Dispatch

Dear Premier Kenney:

On August 4, 2020, Alberta Health Services ("AHS") notified the Mayors of Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo of their intent to remove the integrated municipal and regional ambulance dispatch service. The Minister of Health will not overturn AHS nor accept our offer to pay for the ambulance dispatch contract, and I am respectfully asking you to consider our proposal to pay for local ambulance dispatch through municipal funds (with no property tax increase) in the public safety interests of our community and province.

Caucus Support:

In 2016, the NDP Government contemplated the same ambulance dispatch consolidation plan from AHS. Our community opposed the move, and your Caucus supported our position and stood in the Legislature and spoke against the Government of the day. On April 5, 2016, your current Minister of Infrastructure said the following in a member's statement:

"If transitioned to the minister's suggested substandard model, response time could increase due to the additional call transfer. It would hamper integration with the Calgary fire department, who are often the first on the scene at a medical emergency, and complicates situations requiring a multi-agency response. It could result in confusion and potential loss of critical information as callers are required to repeat their details."

Consistency of Principles:

On May 18, 2016, your current Minister of Environment and Parks and House Leader asked the following questions during question period:

"Given that in communities like Rimbey volunteer firefighters play an integral role in emergency response and given that a lack of ambulance coverage often means that local volunteer firefighters are the first to arrive at the emergency scene, does this government plan to empower volunteer firefighters, who are often off-duty paramedics and EMTs, to fully utilize their specialized skill sets to provide emergency and medical assistance when they are first on the scene to save rural Albertans' lives?"

Your Caucus support in 2016 lead the NDP Government to overturn AHS' decision; the people of our community and region do not understand why your Caucus does not support integrated emergency services now.

Local Government:

As Leader of the Opposition and as Premier, you have acknowledged the importance of local government to Mid-Sized Cities Mayors' Caucus and at Alberta Urban Municipalities Association ("AUMA"). In your 2019 election platform, you mentioned:

"Municipalities need a positive partnership with the provincial Government and long-range planning to meet their community priorities, At the same time, local leaders need to be free from endless provincial mandates and red tape that can result in duplication, waste, and frustration."

AHS and the Minister of Health decided to consolidate ambulance dispatch without engaging with the four municipalities affected despite our ongoing efforts to engage in good faith. The lack of consultation and engagement is an affront to your commitment to work with local Government.

Urban/Rural Unity:

Ambulance dispatch has unified Alberta municipalities. AUMA has come out publically in support of keeping dispatch services local, and the Rural Municipality Association also supports this position. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association President said:

"As municipalities are the level of Government closest to their citizens, AUMA favours the development of local solutions to meet local needs. Meaningful municipal engagement is critical to ensuring that changes to provincial policies and programs are successfully implemented, and AUMA is extremely troubled that once again, a decision was made around consolidating 911 dispatch services without consulting the affected municipalities. As more Alberta municipalities begin to examine integrated dispatch and public safety models, where fire, police, rescue, and emergency medical professionals exist in a single service group, we respectfully request that the province enable municipal autonomy, especially when it results in improved and cost-effective service delivery."

Cost:

AHS uses the Ernst and Young report from February 2020 that identified a \$5 million saving as the basis for their decision to consolidate ambulance dispatch. An internal Government of Alberta memo confirms that the Ministry of Health and AHS EMS brought forward dispatch consolidation in 2019 for Budget consideration, which was factored into Budget 2020. AHS publicly states that consolidation is about patient care, but the additional information we have received confirms it is, in reality, about cost-saving.

Official Proposal

The current contract for ambulance dispatch between the City of Red Deer and AHS is approximately \$1.2 million. **The City of Red Deer is willing to pay for the ambulance dispatch contract without a local property tax increase. I ask that you discuss our offer to pay for ambulance dispatch with your Cabinet.**

Accepting our proposal to pay for the ambulance dispatch contract allows the Province to:

- Realize the desired cost savings to Provincial Government operations
- Allow your Caucus members to preserve the integrity of their position from 2016
- For you to personally keep your commitment in principle to municipalities in your 2019 election promise.
- Protect the emergency response efficiency of the dispatch system and avoid unnecessary red tape.

I appreciate your consideration of this proposal. If you would like to discuss further, I invite you to contact my office at 403.342.8154.

Sincerely,



Tara Veer
Mayor of Red Deer

cc Travis Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Jason Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks and House Leader
Sonya Savage, Minister of Energy and Deputy House Leader
Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreeshen, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Doug Schweitzer, Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation

Nate Glubish, Minister of Service Alberta
Tracy Allard, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver, Minister of Transportation and Deputy House Leader
Demetrios Nicolaides, Minister of Advanced Education
Prasad Panda, Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon, Minister of Seniors and Housing
Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Children's Services
Kaycee Madu, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro, Minister of Health
Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations
Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education and MLA for Red Deer North
Jason Stephan, MLA for Red Deer South
Chris Spearman, Mayor City of Lethbridge
Naheed Nenshi, Mayor City of Calgary
Don Scott, Mayor Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
Barry Morishita, Mayor of Brooks and President of AUMA
Red Deer City Council
Allan Seabrooke, Red Deer City Manager
Steven Ellingson, Red Deer Intergovernmental Strategist