



March 10, 2021

The Honourable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
PO Box 9050 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister,

Re: Emergency Medical Care in BC

We are extremely concerned to hear about the impact that BC Ambulance Service staffing shortages are having on ambulance response times and patient care across BC, and are once again urging you to work with local governments to address the consequences for BC residents.

On February 19, 2021, the Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of BC reported that 30 of the 120 ambulances across the Lower Mainland were unstaffed. As you are aware, this is not an isolated incident and it is being exacerbated by the current Opioid and COVID-19 crisis.

We are aware that you are working to resolve this complex issue, however, we need to utilize the resources that we have in place now, for the benefit of all our residents. The COVID-19 pandemic combined with the ongoing overdose crisis means that now more than ever, help is required to meet emergency medical needs in the province. The challenges faced by our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the need for us to work closer together and maximize our resources to respond to the overdose crisis.

As you know, many municipal fire departments have implemented emergency medical response protocols, whereby firefighters are trained and licensed to administer an enhanced level of emergency medical care to patients. Since 2015, thousands of residents have benefitted from this service. For example, in connection with a recent suspected drug overdose, fire personnel arrived within 4 minutes of receiving the 911 call, however, there was a delay of 50 minutes before BCAS was able to reach the scene.

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As noted in the February, 2019 Auditor General report "Access to Emergency Health Services", better coordination and collaboration between the Provincial and local governments is needed to capitalize on the pool of trained and licensed emergency response personnel that is ready and available to provide critical support for patients until an ambulance arrives and that improved co-ordination of response would support improvements to patient care.

We wrote previously on this issue (April 3, 2020 letter to Stephen Brown, Deputy Minister, enclosed) asking the Provincial government to expand the range of emergency medical events to which municipal emergency medical responders are called to attend. We urge you once again to reconsider your position on this issue and ensure that resources, including medically-trained and/or EMR-trained firefighters, are dispatched to provide the highest available level of care for BC residents.

Now more than ever we need to work together to ensure public safety and in particular, that those most vulnerable and in desperate need of our services, have access to it in a timely fashion.

Yours truly,



Mayor George V. Harvie
City of Delta



Mayor Brad West
City of Port Coquitlam



Mayor Malcolm Brodie
City of Richmond



Mayor Jamie Ross
Village of Belcarra



Mayor Bill Dingwall
City of Pitt Meadows



Mayor Mike Hurley
City of Burnaby



Mayor John McEwen
Village of Anmore



Mayor Val van den Broek
City of Langley



Mayor Darryl Walker
City of White Rock



Mayor Linda Buchanan
City of North Vancouver

Enclosure