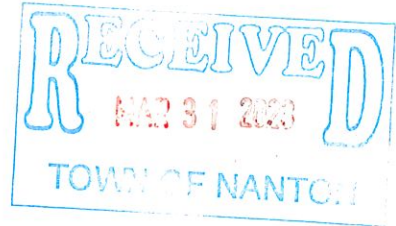




Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary - Varsity



AR 208651

MAR 24 2023

Her Worship Jennifer Handley
Mayor
Town of Nanton
1907 21 Ave, Box 609
Nanton AB T0L 1R0
cao@nanton.ca

Dear Mayor Handley:

Thank you for your letter regarding Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Nanton.

The Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of keeping ambulances in their home communities, and we are taking action to reduce instances in which EMS resources are drawn from neighbouring communities to support urban centres. As part of the Health Care Action Plan (alberta.ca/healthcare-action-plan.aspx) and Alberta Health Services' (AHS) Metro Response Plan, Alberta's government is committed to ensuring an ambulance is available to everyone in the province where and when they need it. We have accepted all recommendations from the Alberta EMS Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC) report and the independent EMS dispatch review. Recommendations identified by front-line workers, municipalities and other EMS partners are being put in place, including:

- Adding 20 additional ambulances during peak hours in Calgary and Edmonton, with the rollout starting in spring 2023;
- Fast-tracking ambulance transfers at emergency departments by moving less-urgent patients to hospital waiting areas, based on new provincial guidelines now in place;
- Freeing up paramedics by contracting appropriately trained resources for non-emergency transfers between facilities in Calgary and Edmonton; and
- Empowering paramedics to assess a patient's condition on scene and decide whether they need to be taken to hospital by ambulance.

Further, in *Budget 2023*, Alberta's government is providing an additional \$196 million over the next three years, which will help implement the AEPAC and EMS dispatch review recommendations and achieve goals related to EMS in the Health Care Action Plan. In addition, a new capital program will provide \$15 million to put more ambulances on the road.

Alberta's government appreciates the role Medical First Responders (MFRs) play in the EMS system and is aware of the joint release from Willow Creek municipalities, *Patient Transport Initiative to Enhance Public Safety*. With that in mind, the final AEPAC report includes a number of new recommendations regarding medical first responders:

- Develop a collaborative vision for the MFR Program, to further its expansion and sustainability;
- Review how MFR agencies are structured within the EMS system;

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- Explore opportunities to expand the MFR Program to Indigenous communities;
- Provide additional supports to MFR agencies to expand capacity; and
- Create inter-professional educational opportunities for EMS practitioners and MFR practitioners.

You may also be interested to know that instead of using highly trained paramedics for non-medical patient transfers to patients' homes from a facility or acute care, AHS will now arrange for alternative transport methods, such as community shuttles, wheelchair accessible taxis, and other local options. In fact, AHS expects that 15 per cent of transports will be diverted from EMS, which means that paramedics will be able to respond to approximately 70 more events per day once this program is implemented. Additionally, AHS will seek contracted providers to offer non-emergency transfers between hospitals and care centres in the Calgary and Edmonton areas, for patients who still require EMS' clinical services.

AHS is also making progress on its actions to add EMS capacity and ensure the most critical patients receive immediate care. More than 460 new EMS employees have been hired since January 2022, including 340 paramedics. As well, in 2022, more ambulance coverage was added in Calgary, Edmonton, Chestermere and Okotoks. This spring, 20 additional ambulances will be added in Calgary and Edmonton during peak hours, and funding will be provided to Lethbridge and Red Deer to support two additional ambulances during peak time. Increasing capacity in these areas will positively impact surrounding communities and the system as a whole.

Additionally, a new EMS/811 Shared Response program launched by AHS in January 2023 empowers EMS dispatch to transfer non-emergency calls to a dedicated team of experienced registered nurses at 811. With the EMS/811 Shared Response team in use, about 40,000 non-emergency responses could be avoided each year, which means more ambulances will be available to respond where they are needed most.

Lastly, the Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform, MLA R.J. Sigurdson, will continue to work with Alberta Health and AHS to develop short- and medium-term priorities to implement improvements to EMS service delivery, including reducing response times and patient handover times in hospital emergency departments.

Thank you for taking the time to write and your advocacy on behalf of the Town of Nanton.

Sincerely,



Jason Copping
Minister of Health

cc: Honourable Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Roger Reid, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod
RJ Sigurdson, Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform