Ponoka

Office of the Mayor

November 23, 2022

Honourable Jason Copping
Minister of Health
432 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
health.minister@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister Copping:

I am writing to you on behalf of our Ponoka Volunteer Fire Department. Actually, I think I could be writing on behalf of most volunteer fire departments in rural Alberta. However, right now I am very concerned for the volunteer fire fighters of my community who bravely step forward and protect us all.

My main concern is with the current state that we find our ambulance service in. This is something that isn't new. It has been brewing for a number of years now and I believe we are about to hit critical mass, which means we are not too far away from doing far more damage to all of our emergency services, simply because we cannot collectively get a handle on how to manage this situation.

On November 21, 2022, we had an incident in the Town of Ponoka, where a pedestrian was hit on one of our roads by a motor vehicle. The first responders on the scene were our volunteer fire fighters. They had an ambulance dispatched from Bashaw which is about 30 minutes away. Ten minutes after the dispatch it was rerouted to Red Deer. By this time the next dispatched ambulance was to come from Leduc, 42 minutes away. In the meantime, the patient was seizing and his heartbeat had dropped to 28 beats per minute. At that time rather than continue to wait for an ambulance and lose the patient, our firefighters made the decision to pack him into the box of one of their pickups, and with a police escort got him to our local hospital. This is a summation of the report I read, and the complete absurdity of this situation I find astounding.

Two months prior, on September 21, 2022, we had a shooting in our downtown. Once again, our volunteer fire fighters were first on the scene because an ambulance had to be dispatched out of Red Deer, about 45 minutes away. In the meantime, our volunteer fire department bandaged and stabilized the victim, and some of the members learned how to deal with a person who had their ear shot off.

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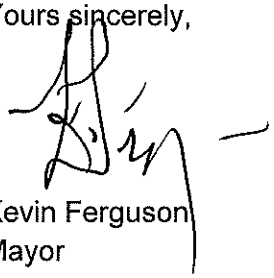
In the last year our volunteer fire department has been the first to arrive on the scene of a medical event 18 times. They do this for the love of their community, and are not being paid-----I would say for them money is not the issue. What is the issue is that after they have been faced with the trauma of a catastrophic medical event, they then have to go back to their real jobs the following day. So I put it to you, that while we are trying to somehow figure our way around this ambulance crisis, we are doing it on the backs of our rural volunteer fire fighters. I represent a rural municipality, and I am telling you what I see is that my friends, neighbours, and fellow citizens are being put at risk on a daily basis because we can't figure this ambulance thing out.

We are running out of time and something needs to be done not only for our cities, but for our rural communities too.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Ferguson
Mayor

c: Premier Danielle Smith
Rachel Notley, Leader of the Opposition
Ron Orr, MLA – Lacombe/Ponoka
Mayors – Alberta Municipalities
Reeve Paul McLauchlin, Ponoka County
Donna Noble, Protective Services Coordinator – Ponoka County