Municipal District of Spirit River No. 133

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November 25, 2022

Honourable Danielle Smith
Officer of the Premier
307 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Honorable Premier Smith,

The M.D. of Spirit River has been made aware that AHS Medivac fixed wing plane service will be halted for the winter season at the Spirit River airport.

AHS, in a phone call with the CAO of the Town, advised that reasons for this decision were:

- Pilot safety concerns due to size of runway, too narrow and short (presently a paved tarmac of 75 feet by 3000 feet – requesting 100feet by 3500 or 4000 feet): present pilots are lacking experience and AHS looking at getting bigger planes (King Air 200, 250 up to 350),

- Airport reporting inconsistencies to NOTAM through NAV Canada on what and when things should be provided. The Town asked for further information and was told to talk with NAV Canada. Town was advised that many airports had this problem, and more training is needed.

- Maintenance processes implemented at the airport needs to be 24/7, the callout process for small airports is ineffective. Too much potential for contamination such as ice and snow.

- Their services will be concentrated on ground transportation going forward and air service will continue in the summer months only.

AHS will be sending the town a letter outlining all this information. AHS was not aware of the upgrades the Town has already completed this year, including AWOS, lighting, beacon, and windsock.

Based on annual records we anticipate this closure will affect up to 25 patients per year. These patients will likely be cardiac patients who will now need to be transported an hour and 15 minutes away to Grande Prairie by ground where they will be moved to a

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fixed wing to be then transported to Edmonton. This is potentially a two hour increase in transport time and with that a greater chance of death.

The MD knows the airport plays an important role in regard to healthcare in this region. There are few families in the region who have not benefited from this service. To lose this along with our routine emergency room closures appears nothing less than a death knell for rural health.

The MD of Spirit River is working with the Town to develop a regional model to assist in addressing any issues on our end, however, this short notice makes it impossible for us to respond in time for the winter season.

We are also lost as to how the present services have sufficed for a number of years but now suddenly are unacceptable.

We ask that you please review this situation and assist us in retaining this vital service for our region.

I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Tony Van Rootselaar, Reeve
Municipal District of Spirit River