



## Report to Council From the Office of Councillor Zoë Royer

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Date: April 13, 2021

Subject: Emergency Medical Response and Better Pre-hospital Care for Our Residents

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### Purpose

Residents and elected official ought to be very troubled by BC's emergency medical care dispatch model when a resident dials 911.

The dispatch model is set by the Province. Municipalities have no say in which First Responder agencies get the call types, regardless of their unique situation, their geography, demographic, their available resources to quickly mobilize on behalf of their residents, or their proximity to ambulatory services and/or other first responder agencies such as fire rescue in urban areas, even if fire rescue services are situated in much closer proximity to the incident when a medical emergency event occurs.

This memo is to seek Council's support for the following motion:

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### Recommendation

**WHEREAS the Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of BC reported on Feb 19, 2021 that: 30 of the 120 ambulances across the Lower Mainland were unstaffed;**

**AND WHEREAS under normal conditions, Port Moody has some of the longest ambulance response times in the region, and this is in no way the fault of BC Paramedics and the outstanding service they provide;**

**AND WHEREAS a ten-minute window is a critical period of time, after which the condition of the patient can rapidly deteriorate, and the illness or injury still to be formally identified can be much more serious than first ascertained by the 911 dispatch call centre;**

**AND WHEREAS Port Moody Firefighters are well equipped to provide support as First Responders arriving on the scene in less than 5 minutes and before ambulance typically arrives;**

**AND WHEREAS municipal fire services are limited to serve residents within our municipal boundaries with fire stations situated accordingly to ensure firefighters are on**

**the scene in 5 minutes. Ambulance services are situated outside of our city and serve many communities on severely stretched resources;**

**AND WHEREAS Port Moody has a strong history of vocalizing their concerns regarding heightened restrictions on the types of calls First Responders can attend;**

**AND WHEREAS Port Moody Fire Rescue have done extensive training in emergency medical response protocols, our firefighters are trained to administer an enhanced level of emergency medical care to provide relief of pain and trauma experienced by our residents at their time of great need, while waiting together for ambulance services to arrive to ensure that they receive the best possible pre-hospital care;**

**AND WHEREAS Port Moody was instrumental in raising awareness for this issue regionally and provincially at the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) in 2018 via late resolution LR4 titled BCEHS Dispatching Protocols, urging BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) revise the Clinical Response Model to ensure that other first responder agencies, such as fire rescue services that provide pre-hospital care, are utilized for all Orange and Yellow calls because these call types: often involve a patient whose condition is deteriorating; can be under-reported or improperly coded; patient comfort is important and should not be excluded from consideration when a dispatcher is deciding whether to forward a call to another agency; and; all patients deserve the best possible care;**

**AND WHEREAS Port Moody and other urban centres worked together with rural Chetwynd at UBCM in 2018, to amend Chetwynd's Ambulatory Services motion B140 such that it recognized the need for more ambulatory support for rural communities, and that other first responder agencies, such as fire rescue services particularly in urban centres, are utilized for all Orange and Yellow calls to ensure residents from *both* rural and urban communities receive pre-hospital care on a timely basis;**

**AND WHEREAS as noted in the Auditor General's report of February 2019 titled Access to Emergency Health Services", better collaboration between the Provincial and local governments is needed to capitalize on the pool of trained response personnel that is ready and available to provide critical support for patients \*until\* an ambulance arrives and that improved coordination of response would support improvements to patient care;**

**AND WHEREAS a select group of members from Port Moody, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta and Vancouver Councils further refined the UBCM motion whereby it was supported unanimously at the Lower Mainland Government Association meeting in May of 2019;**

**AND WHEREAS in the year 2020, and now into 2021, the challenges faced by Lower Mainland communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and opioid overdose crisis have**

increased the need for local governments to maximize their resources to meet the escalating emergency medical needs of our citizens;

**AND WHEREAS** our firefighters are professionals who are trained to respond to the needs of our citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic, including safely entering homes to assist our citizens when required. Our firefighters are well-equipped with all the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), trained on the proper usage of the PPE, and follow all the guidelines of the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), and the BCEHS;

**AND WHEREAS** Port Moody signed onto a letter in solidarity with 13 other Metro Vancouver member municipalities to express opposition to the Provincial Health order imposed on March 31, 2020 that further restricted the types of emergency calls First Responders could attend to during COVID-19, and the negative impacts such restrictions would bring to their residents pre-hospital care. This included, but was not limited to eliminating calls to First Responders to assist residents impacted by the following: explosions and burns (to >18% of the body or caused unconsciousness or involved multiple people), chest pain, difficulty breathing, choking seizures or unconscious diabetes, drowning, electrocution, unconscious laceration or falls greater than 30ft, fentanyl overdose, gunshot wounds, stabbings, and emergency childbirth;

**AND WHEREAS** as of today's date, the Provincial Government has not changed their position:

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the City of Port Moody also write to the Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, to stand in solidarity with 11 other Lower Mainland municipalities who have recently signed a letter dated March 10, 2021, to reaffirm opposition to the Provincial order and call upon the Minister to expand the range of emergency medical events in which municipal emergency medical responders are simultaneously called to attend, in order to ensure the highest available level of pre-hospital care for BC residents;

**AND THAT** the following resolution be submitted to UBCM for the 2021 Resolutions Plenary:

**WHEREAS** career firefighters of many urban centres in the Lower Mainland have done extensive training in emergency medical response protocols. They are trained to administer an enhanced level of emergency medical care to provide relief of pain and trauma experienced by our residents at their time of great need, while waiting together for ambulance services to arrive to ensure that citizens receive the best possible pre-hospital care;

**AND WHEREAS** in the year 2020, and now into 2021, the challenges faced by urban communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and opioid overdose crisis have increased

**the need for Lower Mainland governments to maximize their resources to meet the escalating emergency medical needs of citizens. Professional firefighters are trained to respond to the needs of citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic, including safely entering homes to assist our citizens when required, and are well-equipped with all the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), trained on the proper usage of the PPE, and follow all the guidelines of the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), and the BCEHS. As of the writing of this resolution, the Provincial government has still not changed their position to allow First Responder agencies, such as Fire Rescue, to respond to Orange and Yellow medical emergency calls at the time they are reported to 911:**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Union of BC Municipalities stand in solidarity to support Lower Mainland municipalities in their quest to expand the range of emergency medical events to which municipal First Responders are simultaneously called to attend, in order to ensure the highest available level of pre-hospital care for Lower Mainland residents;**

**AND THAT given their own resources and geography, any urban municipality be able to chose how best to deploy their resources to increase emergency medical response ensuring their residents receive optimal with timely pre-hospital care resulting in better outcomes for residents at their time of need, until such time BC Ambulance Services receives exponentially more resources from the Province of BC and are fully equipped to meet the dire emergency pre-hospital health needs of the citizens of BC**

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Background to be included with the UBCM Resolution, per the UBCM Writing Guidelines for Resolutions:

Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of BC reported on Feb 19, 2021 that 30 of the 120 ambulances across the Lower Mainland were unstaffed.

A ten-minute window is a critical period of time to reach the patient and provide much needed pre-hospital care. After which, the condition of the patient can rapidly deteriorate, and the illness or injury still to be formally identified can be much more serious than first ascertained by the 911 dispatch call centre.

Municipal fire departments in most urban communities are limited in that they can only serve residents within their municipal boundaries. Fire stations are situated accordingly to ensure firefighters are on the scene within 5 minutes. Ambulance services can be situated outside city boundaries with longer travel times and relied upon to serve many communities on severely stretched resources.

Professional firefighters of urban centres in the Lower Mainland are well equipped to provide support as First Responders often arriving on the scene in less than 5 minutes and in many instances, well before ambulance arrives. A common example from this region is fire personnel arriving within 4 minutes of receiving the call, 50 minutes before BC Ambulance Services

arrived. The call out was dispatched at the same time. and is in no way the fault of BC Paramedics and the outstanding service they provide For these reasons, many urban municipalities have a strong history of vocalizing their concerns regarding heightened restrictions on the types of calls First Responders can attend.

This issue was brought to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) in 2018 by Port Moody via late resolution LR4 titled BCEHS Dispatching Protocols, urging BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) to revise the Clinical Response Model for urban municipalities to ensure that other first responder agencies, such as fire rescue services that provide pre-hospital care, are utilized for all Orange and Yellow calls because these call types: often involve a patient whose condition is deteriorating; can be under-reported or improperly coded; patient comfort is important and should not be excluded from consideration when a dispatcher is deciding whether to forward a call to another agency; and; all patients deserve the best possible care. Port Moody and other urban centres worked together with rural Chetwynd at UBCM in 2018, to amend Chetwynd's Ambulatory Services motion B140 such that it recognized the need for more ambulatory support for rural communities, and that other first responder agencies, such as fire rescue services particularly in urban centres, are utilized for all Orange and Yellow calls to ensure residents from *both* rural and urban communities receive pre-hospital care on a timely basis.

A select group of members from Port Moody, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta and Vancouver Councils further refined the UBCM motion whereby it was supported unanimously at the Lower Mainland Government Association (LMLGA) meeting of May 2019. And as stated in the Auditor General's report of February 2019 titled "Access to Emergency Health Services", better collaboration between the Provincial and local governments is needed to capitalize on the pool of trained response personnel that is ready and available to provide critical support for patients \*until\* an ambulance arrives and that improved coordination of response would support improvements to patient care.

The majority of Metro Vancouver member municipalities wrote to express opposition to the Provincial Health order imposed on March 31, 2020, that further restricted the already restrictive types of emergency calls First Responders could attend to during COVID-19. The negative impacts such restrictions would bring to their residents pre-hospital care is significant. This included, but was not limited to eliminating calls to First Responders to assist residents impacted by the following: explosions and burns (to >18% of the body or caused unconsciousness or involved multiple people), chest pain, difficulty breathing, choking seizures or unconscious diabetes, drowning, electrocution, unconscious laceration or falls greater than 30ft, fentanyl overdose, gunshot wounds, stabbings, and emergency childbirth. On March 10, 2021, many Lower Mainland municipalities wrote again to the Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, urging the province to reconsider their position.