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October 4, 2021

Minister of Health  
423 Legislature Building  
10800-97 Ave  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

To Honourable Copping,

The County of Vermilion River Protective Services includes eight fire stations, of which seven perform medical first response. This capacity has been delegated to those stations, which are often in a rural setting, with expected delays for advanced medical care such as those performed by paramedics.

The County of Vermilion River Fire Service (CVR FS) has an annual call volume of approximately 700 – 800 calls, with over 30 per cent of these being medical first response. The remainder of the calls, like motor vehicle collisions, also contain an element of patient care, meaning County Firefighters are a critical link in the pre-hospital survival chain.

With improved statistical records, since February 2021, the numbers indicate that access to pre-hospital care, such as primary and advanced care paramedics, has been quite delayed in our region. Often, County Firefighters will be on-scene for 30 minutes or more, waiting for ambulance. This is a sharp increase from even two years ago, when County Firefighters showed up, provided patient care and usually were relieved within a 10 minute window. Call logs have also shown that ambulances that are dispatched are coming from outside the region, such as Elk Point, Wainwright and as far away as Cold Lake.



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With the need for urgent medical intervention expected to raise in the future, a better plan has to be implemented to ensure that our rural residents get the care they deserve and that our volunteer first responders are not placed in an extended position of care and exposed to situations they are not equipped to perform.

The need for more staffing, ample access to advanced medical care and a reduction in dispatch delay must be addressed. The first hour, as you know, is the most critical.

Best regards,

Lonnie Wolgien, Reeve  
County of Vermilion River

Cc: Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright MLA Garth Rowswell  
All Rural Municipalities