An open letter from Mayor Don Scott

WHEN YOU CALL 9-1-1, SECONDS MATTER

I am writing to you today to alert you to an urgent matter.

On August 4, 2020, Alberta Health Services surprised us with a decision to end local dispatch of Emergency Medical Services in the RMWB, as well as in the cities of Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Calgary.

This will eventually see all emergency medical calls rerouted to provincial communication centres in Edmonton, Calgary, or Peace River.

This is a huge concern and is something we all need to be vocal about.

Lives are at stake

First, I want to say that our dispatchers are the best in the province. They know how to dispatch quickly, safely and efficiently – even in the most difficult circumstances and to the hardest to reach areas. Consistently, they perform their jobs better than their provincial counterparts.

We can prove that.

Our regional dispatch system also connects people to the emergency help they need faster than an AHS dispatch centre.

We can prove that too.

Join us in this fight: tell your MLA why seconds matter to you
Our Region is complex. It includes vast rural areas. As a result, local knowledge is essential for emergency dispatch.

A provincial dispatcher will not know what a 9-1-1 caller means by the Bridge to Nowhere or Supertest. However, a local dispatcher will know Cheechum Village is not near Cheechum Lake; that they are 40 kilometres apart.

A provincial dispatcher made that mistake just last month, an error caught just in time by an alert RMWB dispatcher.

Mistakes like these can and will cost lives.

Today, residents who call 9-1-1 immediately access a coordinated response which allows our firefighters and paramedics to work together to save lives. Today, when we need another ambulance, we don’t need one rushed from some distant community in the province. We have one here, ready to go.

For more than 40 years we’ve done things this way, because it works.

Join us in this fight: tell your MLA why seconds matter to you.
Current RMWB Emergency Dispatch

911 Caller → Municipal 911 Dispatch → EMS, Fire

Future AHS Process

911 Caller → Municipal 911 Dispatch

EMS calls transferred to AHS call centre

AHS 911 Dispatcher

EMS

If Fire is needed, EMS will need to contact the Municipal Dispatcher again, delaying the response
This AHS decision will add layers of complexity and make this critical process take longer.

**How can you help?**

It will not be easy, but there is hope. We have a short window of opportunity to change this decision.

In the past, we fought this, and we won.

Council and administration are reaching out to our friends and partners; we are joining a larger lobbying effort with other affected municipalities; we are sending letters to our local provincial representatives; the minister of Health, and more.

But most of all we need residents to express their concerns – tell your MLA how you feel about this decision. Go higher; send an email to the Minister of Health. You will find all their contact information below.

Tell them why seconds and minutes matter to you when you call 9-1-1.

Do it today.

Stay safe,

**Don Scott**
Don Scott,  
Mayor,  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

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**Join us in this fight:** tell your MLA why seconds matter to you

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