



For Immediate Release

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Foothills Regional 911 Commission Continues to Press NDP Government for Action ***Monitoring is not enough when lives are at risk***

Black Diamond, AB – The Foothills Regional 911 Commission (FRESC) is calling for Alberta Health Minister Sarah Hoffman to do more than monitor the broken emergency dispatch process impacting over 130,000 rural residents in Southern Alberta.

Minister Hoffman promised to monitor the situation in a statement issued to media on May 9, 2017. Her response was prompted after FRESC went public with concerns about the impact the fragmented dispatch system is having on the lives of Southern Alberta residents, and provided evidence of long lag times between calls being received and first responders arriving on scene.

“Nothing has changed and we continue to experience the same issues. No action has been taken by the Minister to hold AHS accountable or to fix these issues,” says Suzanne Oel, Chair of the Foothills Regional 911 Commission.

Municipal Fire first responders are also deeply concerned about the impact that fragmented dispatch is having on emergency situations, seeing both the lives of residents and responders put at risk.

“FRESC and its Municipal Fires Chiefs will be looking to the **Alberta Fire Chiefs Association** for support at the June 2017 Conference. The objective is to show the Minister of Health how important municipal Fire first response times are and that any delay beyond simultaneous dispatch of EMS and Fire is unacceptable,” says Silvio Adamo, Director of Protective Services and Fire Chief, Town of Banff.

Only five per cent of emergency calls requiring MFR are being sent to Foothills 911 within the industry standard time frames. To illustrate just how serious these delays are, recent examples include a witnessed cardiac arrest where CPR was in progress by bystanders. The ambulance response time was 20 minutes, as it was coming from another community. There was a 3 minute 41 second delay in requesting local Fire Medical Response.

“Rural residents are expressing their concerns by sending letters to the Minister’s office. Municipalities are also encouraging constituents to make their voices heard. This issue is not going away,” says Jamie Tiessen, Foothills Regional 911 Commission Vice-Chair.

The Mayors & Reeves of Southwest Alberta have also confirmed their support for the Foothills Regional 911 Commission in its endeavor to restore emergency medical services dispatch to the level of service their citizens experienced prior to the consolidation of EMS dispatch.

“We are moving into a very busy summer season for our first responders. There will be hundreds of thousands of people enjoying high-risk outdoor activities, travelling on our roads and visiting tourist attractions and parks. What will it take for the government to take action? No one is accountable and this is unacceptable,” says Tiessen.

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FRESC continues to lobby that the only solution to eliminate the delays and errors, is to have the 911 call managed by one center, with fire and ambulance resources being sent immediately and simultaneously for a coordinated emergency response.

“We want equitable emergency response service for all Albertans. Other municipalities, including the City of Calgary, fought very hard to keep their fire and ambulance dispatch together. We believe our solution fits well into the AHS EMS Dispatch System, which AHS promotes as a collaborative model benefiting all Albertans,” says Oel.

Since the Commission launched their public campaign in May, the Minister’s office has not reached out to FRESC to discuss potential solutions.

Albertans are invited to visit: FixRural911Dispatch.com for information and a sample letter to send to the Minister’s office and local MLA’s.

About Foothills Regional 911 Commission:

The Foothills Regional 911 Commission is responsible for 911 services and emergency response dispatch for 26 municipalities and 33 fire departments/stations in southern Alberta. It serves a population of 130,000 people, covering a geographic area that extends from Banff to the Crowsnest Pass. Foothills Regional 911 Commission, member communities include: Arrowwood, Banff, Black Diamond, Canmore, Claresholm, Crowsnest Pass, Eden Valley (served by Longview), Fort Macleod, Granum, Lake Louise, M.D. of Willow Creek, M.D. of Ranchland (served by Longview and Nanton), Stavely, Tsuu Tina, Black Diamond, Carmangay, Champion, Vulcan County, High River, Longview, Okotoks, Turner Valley, M.D. of Foothills (Priddis, Spruce Meadows, Heritage Point, Blackie and Cayley Fire Departments), Lomond, Milo, Nanton and Vulcan.

Additional materials included with this release:

- Statistics summary and new recent examples of delayed response incidents
- Infographic “The 911 Call Explained”