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February 23, 2023
File No.: 0530-02-01

VIA EMAIL: HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honorable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
PO Box 9050, STN PROV GOVT.
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Dix:

RE: BC Emergency Health Services Response in the Central Okanagan

At the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) Board meeting held on February 2, 2023, the Board of Directors endorsed the following resolution:

THAT the Regional Board authorize the Chair to write a letter to the province to advocate for escalation of emergency response services paramedics and ambulances across the province.

Our residents in both urban and rural settings have experienced gaps within the BCEHS system. We recognize the complex and ongoing challenges faced by the health system including recruitment, retention, training, and call volumes. This is further exasperated by the influx of new residents as BC's fastest growing CMA.

In the Central Okanagan, it has been reported that currently, ambulances from outlying communities, such as Lake Country, West Kelowna and Peachland are used to augment Kelowna ambulance services, often leaving those areas without ambulance coverage for hours at a time. Further, given operational constraints, first responders from local volunteer fire departments in Electoral Areas are frequently called upon which shifts the burden to local government to manage.

On May 30, 2018, BCEHS implemented a new Clinical Response Model aimed at more accurately matching resources with the needs of patients to improve patient care however it did

not address call volumes. BCEHS receive between 1,400 and 1,700 requests for service each day. In 2022, BCEHS reported that they were hiring more than 600 additional full-time paramedics, however there is no further information indicating the hiring of additional call-takers and support or results achieved.

Given the challenges now and in the future for emergency service providers, BCEHS needs support from your Ministry to supply additional funding of their three integrated dispatch operations for additional emergency medical call-takers and paramedics. As call volumes increase and provincial population growth continues to rise, on behalf of the Central Okanagan, I wish to advocate for an escalation of emergency medical support services, paramedics, and ambulances across the province.

Thank you much for your consideration of our input and request. We would be grateful for advice on how we can work together in addressing the complex emergency needs of health care response in our region.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Loyal Wooldridge', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Loyal Wooldridge
Chairperson