

February 3, 2021

Letter of Petition

**Emergency Response Dispatch in Metchosin, B.C.
From community residents to:**

Honourable Adrian Dix
B.C. Minister of Health

Stephen Brown
Deputy Minister
BC Ministry of Health

David Byers
Associate Deputy Minister
Clinical Leadership

Teri Collins
Assistant Deputy Minister
Health Services Division

Carlene Thistle-Walker
A/Director of Stakeholder Engagement

Amie Mazza
Director, Provincial and Specialized
Services

Re: Metchosin Fire Department First Response Team under the Critical Response Model

The 526 Metchosin residents who have signed this letter of petition urgently seek a re-assessment of your 2018 decisions to move to a centralized Critical Response Model (CRM). The fall-out of these decisions has been a significant reduction in the number of 911 call-outs to the Metchosin Fire Department Emergency Response Team. In July of 2019, the Metchosin Seniors' Association wrote to convey dismay and serious objections to this policy. To date, a substantive response/resolution specific to our local issues and needs has not been received.

At 71 square kilometers, Metchosin is the second largest municipality in the Capital Regional District (CRD) with a widely distributed population of fewer than 4,800 people, a quarter of whom are over the age of 65 years. In addition, the Metchosin Fire Department capture area includes the 12 square kilometers of the Beecher Bay lands and First Nations residents.

Most Metchosin residents live on properties of at least two acres, often on winding, narrow and hilly roads. The terrain includes numerous off-road topographical challenges such as extensive regional and local parks and an enviable 13 km. network of trails developed and maintained by District volunteers. Metchosin has 95 status farms (BC Assessment Authority 2020) including many livestock operations of size. Our Volunteer Fire Department and its First Response Team, with local knowledge of the terrain and residents, is far more effective in accessing these homes and enterprises, particularly at night, than the BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) could ever be.

Metchosin provides more green space for public use than any other municipality within the CRD. Conservative estimates based on recent traffic counts indicate an increase in daytime use of 45 – 50 per cent, attributed to Covid-19 health awareness and massive adjacent community build-out.

Metchosin residents work diligently to support a strong sense of community so that friends and neighbours who suffer illness or injury do not have to face these challenges alone. Providing this immediate care and comfort, Metchosin’s typical on-scene First Response time is 4½ minutes and is often a key factor in patient survival and recovery. Data indicates that for the period of 2015 to 2019 inclusive, 240 out of a total of 577 calls (42%) to 911 took BCAS more than 15 minutes to arrive on the scene; this resulted in 48 protracted response times per year. Those can be unnecessarily lonely and frightening times for our neighbors and represents a failure of the CRM.

This failure to serve our community members is unnecessary. Our local First Response Team has been providing on-site medical assistance since 1980. Over 15,000 person-hours have been invested in the training and call-response of volunteers. In addition, over \$60,000 has been invested in specialized equipment, operational costs and apparatus-design built specific to our first responder and rescue needs. Metchosin has paid these costs for years through resident tax dollars and at no cost to the Province.

We in Metchosin request your immediate go-ahead to stipulate the level and timing of Emergency First Response Services we deliver to our community members. Our strong local volunteer organizations are in agreement, including the Association for the Protection of Rural Metchosin, the Metchosin Community Association, the Metchosin Seniors’ Association and the Metchosin Equestrian Society. Persons associated with these organizations, and many others, independently endorse the attached Petition Statement (Appendix A). We are sure that most British Columbians would agree with us.

The District of Metchosin’s First Response team and our residents agonize over the lack of early notification. Indeed, lives are at stake. The newly coded Emergency Response system (CRM) was designed as a one-size fits all. However, a well-trained, timely, volunteer response system as in the District of Metchosin, as a timely adjunct to the BC Ambulance Service, is what our rural residents and visitors need and should have.

We await your early response to this important issue.

Sincerely,



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C.C. Neil Lilley, Senior Provincial Executive Director, Patient Care, Communications and Planning, BC
Emergency Health Services

Hon. Mitzi Dean, MLA for Esquimalt-Metchosin

Mayor John Ranns and Council, District of Metchosin

Stephanie Dunlop, Fire Chief, District of Metchosin

Association for the Protection of Rural Metchosin, Executive

Metchosin Community Association, Executive

Metchosin Equestrian Society, Executive

Metchosin Seniors' Association, Executive

Editor, Times-Colonist, Victoria