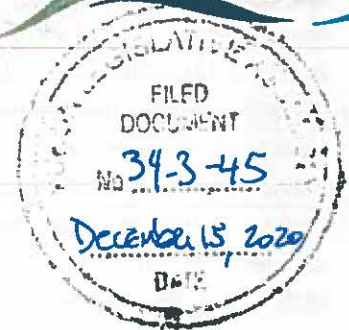




March 27, 2019

Brad Cathers
MLA, Lake Laberge
Yukon Legislative Assembly
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 2C6



Brad
Dear Mr. ~~Cathers~~,

Re: Yukon EMS Rural Coverage and Issues

Thank you for your letter dated February 19, 2019. I appreciate the opportunity to follow up with you on these issues, because we absolutely value our EMS volunteers!

The only locations where Yukon Emergency Medical Services (EMS) schedules local coverage are Whitehorse, Watson Lake and Dawson City. This corresponds to an approved staffing model that permits the branch to deploy Yukon Government employees to deliver paramedic services. In thirteen other communities (and after hours, on weekends, and on holidays in Watson Lake and Dawson City) the EMS program is built around volunteer availability.

Volunteers are self-scheduling. This means that each individual responder offers coverage within their home communities only when they are personally available. Volunteer supervisors help local responders to coordinate team activities such as training, meetings and stand-by. Although most volunteer teams do provide coverage forecasts one-week in advance this is not a condition of volunteer engagement. These forecasts do assist EMS and its service partners to anticipate coverage shortfalls. The forecasts change frequently – often at the last minute – in response to fluctuations in the personal schedules of individual volunteers. Due to this operational reality, EMS does not forecast volunteer coverage for a month ahead of time, nor do they track instances of discontinuous volunteer service. I have provided a sample of the most recent weekly forecast for volunteer EMS coverage. This table is attached to the daily Situation Reports that are circulated to partner agencies, health care facilities and key stakeholders of the EMS team.

Since December 2018, Medevac (air ambulance) crews have responded to the communities more than 70 times. Over this same time period, they have been required to respond to Haines Junction four times when local volunteers were unavailable. So far this year, Medevac crews have not been required to supplement local coverage in any other community. Such responses are consistent with the primary duties routinely assigned to Medevac crew members, which assist health practitioners within Yukon to move their patients, along the continuum of medical care, to appropriate hospitals.

The issues of uniform allocations and training availability are both sources of on-going pressure within the EMS branch. Meeting the individual needs of 110 responders, without being able to directly control their schedules, is very challenging. According to the most recent EMS uniform inventory, there are two active responders (in Faro) who do not have full uniform kit. In each case, the responder has other items of issued clothing but is lacking uniform pants. In addition, there are several newly recruited volunteers who will be issued uniforms once they complete the on-boarding process, and a number of senior responders who are awaiting replacement uniform items. These shortfalls in uniform issue are due to recurring procurement delays during fiscal year 2018-19. Yukon EMS is now working within an approved Standing Offer Agreement with a local vendor to bring in a complete uniform order before March 31st of this year. Should delivery fall short of our needs, EMS will move ahead immediately with an additional Request for Purchase in the new fiscal year.

EMS has provided a table that outlines the remainder of their planned training syllabus to the end of this fiscal year. Once next year's budget allocations have been announced, EMS will work with community volunteers to make sure that the training needs of all responders are addressed in the fiscal year 2019-20. Information about course timing and availability will be made available to participants through the on-line Learning Management System, bi-weekly supervisor teleconferences, and the Community Operations Weekly Report that is distributed electronically to all EMS volunteers.

Yukon EMS deploys teams of employees and volunteers to provide coverage to all communities at all times. Whenever local coverage is not available within a specific community, the territorial team works together to address calls for service. Typically, this means that Yukon EMS tasks the closest, appropriate, resource to respond. This may be an adjacent community team (with the assistance of a community nurse), an allied emergency response service, or a Medevac team out of Whitehorse. By sharing resources within our existing service model, and by making use of mutual aid relationships with allied emergency response agencies, EMS always responds to requests for emergency medical assistance.

In closing I want to thank for your on-going interest and continued support for public safety in Yukon. If you have any further questions on the community service model or the volunteer supports provided by Yukon EMS, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



John Streicker
Minister of Community Services