Twitter Thread by Tom Ross



Tom Ross
@Tommy_Slick

After the province's ambulance dispatch consolidation plan took place last month, mayors of Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge and Wood Buffalo are sharing concerns. #ableg

This morning, during a council meeting, Calgary's 911 director said they experienced issues on the first day of the switch in the city that prevented someone from receiving timely medical assistance. https://t.co/Ca6IeeskpS

Red Deer Mayor Tara Veer says they have all been seeing issues since the switch. She is calling for a third-party inquiry to investigate these problems.

Lethbridge Mayor Chris Spearman says they're not too surprised about technical failures, but they are particularly concerned that AHS has not been very up front about what happened. There have also been several mix-ups in his community. Lack of accountability from the province.

Spearman says this is clearly not about money or patient care, so he asks the province why are they doing this? "Lives are at risk, and we need to pause this transition now." He also calls for an investigation.

"This is outrageous," says Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi. He says this is not a good idea, and it is clear that AHS is not prepared. Took only 13 hours to experience a major communications failure in Calgary.

Meanwhile, local 911 operators knew what was going on and could figure out what was happening. But still, there was no communication from AHS about the issue. These outages happen, but it shows why it is better to have operators all in one room.

Now, we hear from RM Wood Buffalo Mayor Don Scott. He says the first two weeks are proof the system is not working. Local staff have had to intervene in 20 per cent of medical calls.

Veer again reiterates an immediate investigation into what happened last week, and to look into other issues municipalities have experienced. And they want the change to be paused.

Questions now. @AdamMacVicar asks about the technical failure, and if the province has discussed it at all.

Nenshi says it was never brought to their attention, local officials actually informed AHS first. No proactive communications or anything indicating a review.

"At the political level: Not a word," adds Nenshi.

Adam follows up to ask about how that review would look.

Veer says they expect the government to commission the review, since this is their responsibility.

From @SammyHudes: Any further issues since last week? Is this a systemic issue?

Nenshi says they're looking at two things. First, they don't know how often an outage like this would happen. But also, what if there are errors on addresses etc.?

Nenshi says there could be several technical issues at play. But some of these issues are not uncommon, as they have heard from other places where the consolidation already took place.

Next question asking Mayor Scott about some details of issues up north he talked about.

In one, there was an injured snowmobiler. Scott says a team capable of helping was actually close by, but AHS sent an ambulance that was 30 minutes away. Fire medics were not called.

Scott says those firefighters are "furious" about what happened. "No one should be surprised," he adds.

Nenshi cannot go into many details about the incidents last week, one involved a small error in an address and it caused a significant delay to fire crews being called.

On the second incident, Nenshi poses a hypothetical. Let's say there's an emergency downtown, where there's two fire halls. But AHS did not inform them and then it takes 20 minutes for ambulances to get on scene. This is essentially what happened in the case last week.

Question for Mayor Spearman about delays in the Lethbridge area, and how rural areas are impacted.

Spearman says they are concerned about rural areas, but no specific examples yet. He says their local geographic knowledge is important.

But in the city, there were two "very serious" incidents during the outage last week. He says the system is not bound for success and again says they are very concerned about a lack of communication from AHS.

Nenshi jumps in for clarification on the downtown incident, fire crews were never called. Even though they were close by. Instead it took 16 minutes for an ambulance to arrive.

@vancan19 asks if the province has acknowledged the offer to absorb some of the costs in maintaining integrated service.

Veer says it has been largely ignored, no intention to overturn the consolidation decision.

Spearman agrees with that, and it sounds like the offer has fallen on deaf ears.

Scott says any response they have gotten is to shoot down the offer. And then the province points a finger at them to accuse them of running the system poorly.

"It's a complete calamity," Scott adds.

End of questions. Veer closes, says they want to make it clear this affects all Albertans at risk. The system is over capacity, and the outage is just one example of the issue. Need an immediate inquiry.

Here is a copy of the letter from the mayors sent to the province.

February 1, 2021

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Re: Ambulance Dispatch Consolidation Failures

Dear Premier Kenney, Minister Shandro and Government Caucus:

The Minister of Health and Alberta Health Services ("AHS") promised that there would be no service disruptions or degradation of emergency service delivery after ambulance dispatch consolidation. Since January 12, 2021, our communities and emergency patients have experienced delays and disruption in dispatch times and first responders have been exposed to additional risk. We request an immediate inquiry into the Emergency Medical Services ("EMS") dispatch failure, which occurred last Tuesday. We request an urgent resolution to the following public safety issues:

AHS Technical Outage:

We would like to bring to your attention a significant emergency situation that occurred on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, between 10:30 pm and 11:42 pm. The AHS South Communication Centre experienced a technical outage, which resulted in AHS Emergency Medical Services dispatching ambulances manually and AHS dispatchers did not have access to the following services:

- The Computer Aided Dispatch ("CAD") interface between AHS CAD and the fire CAD
- Mobile data terminals,
- GPS tracking of ambulances, and
- The ability to access ambulance mobile phone numbers.

AHS did not notify our emergency dispatchers at the time of the outage, nor has AHS provided any updates for clarification on the outage. Our emergency dispatchers have