

MOTION

8. Planning to Support Distributed Ambulance Services in the City of Vancouver (Member's Motion B.4)

At the Council meeting on July 20, 2021, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services meeting on July 21, 2021, in order to hear from speakers.

MOVED by Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. Keeping Vancouverites safe during and after a fire, natural disaster, or other emergency, is a City priority. As the City's website reminds: everyone plays a role in making sure we all stay safe and secure. The City of Vancouver are responsible for Police and Fire Rescue Services;
2. The provincial BC Ambulance Services (BCAS) are a key part of Vancouver's healthcare and public safety system, providing emergency medical services, including pre-hospital treatment and ambulance transportation;
3. Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) provide emergency paramedic response, but are not equipped for advanced life support or patient transport to hospital;
4. The BC Ambulance Service operate under the authority of BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) a department of Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), accountable to and a responsibility of the BC Ministry of Health;
5. BC Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers provide front line staffing support for BC Ambulance Services and in recent years have expressed concerns that in Vancouver and elsewhere in BC, services are stretched to maximum workload capacity which is leading to higher levels of burnout and stress related injuries for paramedics and longer wait times for patients;
6. Vancouver's expanding population and higher call volumes mean higher demand for ambulance services. The nationally accepted benchmark for response time in a metro area is 8:59 minutes, and requires well-resourced and appropriately distributed ambulance service stations that Vancouver is challenged to support;
7. In recent years due to management decisions and land economics, Vancouver has lost ambulance service stations including the Downtown/West End's 242 (Richards and Davie), South Van's 244 (57th and Cambie), Advanced Care at VGH, and stations at both Boundary and Hastings and Boundary and Vanness;

8. Distribution and location of the four remaining BC Ambulance Service Stations within the City of Vancouver (excluding Children's Hospital infant ambulance station) are all low-density leased properties in highly developable areas:
 - a. Station 248 (DTES) 731 East Cordova;
 - b. Station 245 (Kingsway) 1538 East King Edward;
 - c. Station 243 (Arbutus Ridge) 2940 Arbutus St; and
 - d. Station 261 (Mt Pleasant) 181 West 7th;
9. At current, ambulance services for large parts of South Vancouver are seconded to Burnaby and Richmond respectively. The entire downtown peninsula has one overworked ambulance station in the DTES that also serves NE Vancouver;
10. In their 2019 review of BCEHS and report "Access to Emergency Health Services," the Office of the Attorney General of BC advised that the coordination of fire departments and emergency health services needs to be strengthened. As well, ambulance response times were taking too long and compromising patient outcomes;
11. Municipalities have a role to ensure ambulance service stations and their equitable distribution inform city planning and public benefit strategies. In Richmond, the new Fire Hall 3 / Ambulance Service Station 250 at 9680 Cambie is an example of a city-funded co-location, where purpose-built ambulance station is leased to BCEHS and additionally benefits increased coordination between fire and ambulance emergency services. Elsewhere, Revelstoke and West Vancouver are both looking at building workforce housing with ambulance service station co-location opportunities on city-owned land, leasing purpose built stations to BCEHS;
12. The June 2021 heatwave saw catastrophic loss of life in Vancouver and across the region, highlighting a number of emergency response fragilities, including the ambulance system and need for a well-distributed and resourced service.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to report back on policy development options and financial impacts to support distributed ambulance services in City of Vancouver, including but not limited to:
 - a. Needs assessment that considers transportation networks, accessibility, and resilience of existing and future ambulance service stations, best practices and patient outcomes;
 - b. Advocacy and resources to support adding distributed ambulance service stations in Vancouver; and
 - c. Exploring opportunities to co-locate leased BCAS stations with new VFRS facilities; new hospital or clinical facilities; and/or other new developments.

- B. THAT the Mayor write a letter on behalf of council to the Premier and Minister of Health advocating for robust ambulance services for the City of Vancouver, sharing the city's concerns and support for public safety and equitable distribution of ambulance service.

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