An aerial photograph of a town nestled in a valley, surrounded by dense green forests. In the background, a large body of water is visible, and further back, a range of mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The entire image has a light, semi-transparent overlay.

# ENOUGH is ENOUGH We need a solution

UBCM Small Talk Forum 2022



**Nakusp Ambulance serves an area that extends from Trout Lake to Summit Lake, and Angel Falls, which is located at the top of Monashee Pass.**

**New Denver Ambulance serves the communities of Hills, Rosebery, Silverton, Three Forks and Enterprise Creek**

Our roads can be a very dangerous section of highway with relatively frequent car/motorcycle crashes, over 50 avalanches zones, not to mention two ferry crossings to reach and transport patients in distress and dependant of this emergency service.



**November 19, 2021 - Our council and staff were consulted by BC Emergency Health Service, (BCEHS) of this new Schedule On Call (SOC) system, but, after reviewing and assessing this system, we emphatically told the BCEHS representative that this system will not work for this large area of coverage. This system will fail by putting patients at increased risk and could prove fatal with longer ambulance response times.**

**Under this new SOC system:**

- One crew of two are working a three 8-hour day shift 8am to 4pm, and on this shift are to be on call for the other 48 hours at \$2.00/per hour 24/7.**
- Another crew of two will work the next three days rotating every three days and be on call the other 48 hours at \$2.00/per hour 24/7.**
- 2nd BCEHS car is now nonexistent when a call comes in along with no staff to call on as the other two SOC crew members are timed out as per regulations of time worked.**

**This conversion to SOC has substantially increased response times up to 20 minutes or much more, especially when no one is at the station during those 16 hours.**

# THE 'GOLDEN HOUR'



Being on the Local Volunteer Fire Dept, and Road Rescue we use - The “golden hour” - which is the term often used in trauma or emergency care to suggest that an injured or sick person must receive definitive treatment within the first 60 minutes from the time of injury or appearance of symptoms. Doctors believe that there is a golden hour between life and death. We also use the 10-minute rule once the road rescue team arrives on scene at a Motor Vehicle Accident, which means we have 10 minutes to remove the patient(s) from the scene to the ambulance and onto the hospital.



# THE 'GOLDEN HOUR'

Why Response Times Matter. The national response time goal for paramedics in Canada is **8 minutes 59 seconds**, for the most serious emergencies. In the province of British Columbia, this goal is only being met 50% of the time, especially in the rural areas with this new SOC system.

**Every second counts.** Any delays only serve to deteriorate the victims' condition to a point that severely hampers their prospects for making a full recovery. There are many time sensitive, life threatening emergencies where a timely response by an ambulance staffed with a Paramedic can mean the difference between life and death. Other times it can mean the difference between a healthy future and one full of impairment due to an extended period of oxygen deprivation to the brain or heart.

Our local doctors have also expressed major concerns, stating **"This is an issue that certainly needs to be addressed. We are often stuck with sick patients as we have no ambulance available to transfer them to another hospital"**.





Interfacility transfers out of rural communities, like Nakusp and New Denver, do not occur after 4 pm unless the patient is classified as life or threatened limb. This means numerous patients are left without safe transport to a higher level of care until their condition deteriorates significantly enough to be classified appropriately.

- What is not mentioned with this slogan is that out of those two ambulances you see only one may be staffed with a full crew
  - This means a lone responder arrives first to support the patient but they can not be transferred until a second crew from another community arrives
  - This leaves two communities without 911 resources at the same time

As a member of the Volunteer Nakusp Fire Department and Road Rescue over the 15 years, I hear and respond voluntarily to the emergency calls during the day and night. I have begun documenting and monitoring the time delays, and the frustrations within the departments of the ambulance service since the SOC system was recently introduced in October 2019.

Below are some of the events, information and stats since November 2021.

**November 23, 2021** - Example of one delay, and no ambulance coverage for Nakusp.

- 00:17.15 (12:17am) our local volunteer Fire Department/Road Rescue were called to MVA/Extrication at Needles (refer to map), our local ambulance was also paged to attend, took more than 1 hour for ambulance to attend. There now was no coverage for Nakusp if another 911 call was issued, what happens now as a life may be at stake.

*Deborah Guest November 07, 2021.  
Nakusp BC.*

*Dear Mayor Tom, and Honorable Katrine  
Konray.*

*I am writing to you as last night (November 6<sup>th</sup> 2021) there could have been a disaster. I had a vein that broke open, spewing blood a foot plus in distance, blood all over, we had called the 911 for help at 5:15 pm at 5:35 it still was not here I was loaded into the back seat of my car and was driven to the emergency by my husband and friend, getting help from our neighbour all the time holding a belt tightened on my leg and holding a towel on the wound to help control the bleed. We arrived to the hospital and had such good care, getting me out of the car onto a bed. My husband returned home with my friend to clean up the bloody mess and then my husband did called to cancel the ambulance then noticed the ambulance was backing in our drive way at 5:45. My husband observed only 1 person attending the scene is quite disturbing. I am wanting to ask please even a town our size*

*does need a staff at our Ambulance station, so to not have situations like this not to happen again.. It gives me a shudder to think what if I was having a stroke or heart attack..  
YIKES !!!!!!! Sincerely Deborah Guest.*

RECEIVED  
NOV - 9 2021



**November 30, 2021** – Sent a letter to The Honourable Katrine Conroy

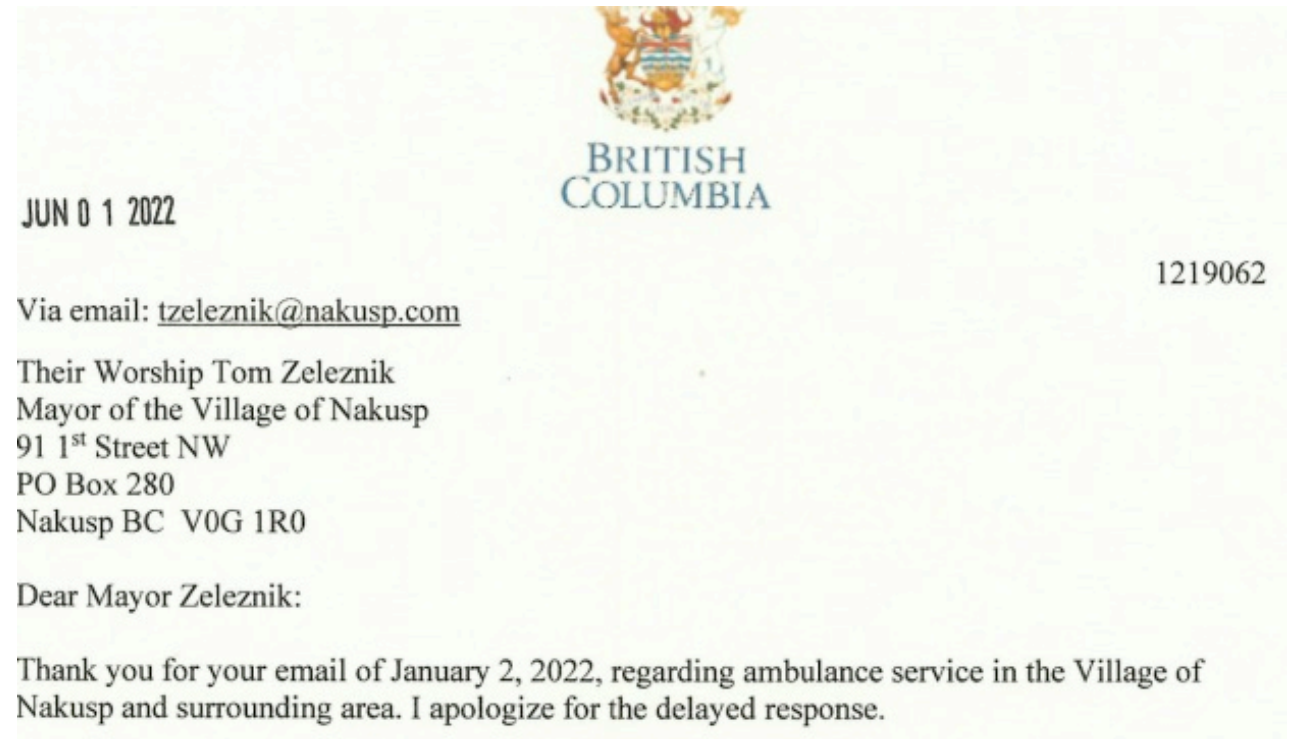
As our MLA for our area, was asking for her help and assistance in arranging a meeting with our Honorable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, and herself.

**December 15, 2021** – Received a reply thanking us for our strong advocacy for your communities. Stated - First, to request a meeting with Minister Adrian Dix, the best approach would be to write to his office directly.

Other options for advocating for change include: (interim) Vice President and Chief Ambulance Officer Leanne Heppell.

Regarding the interfacility transfer concerns, this would need to be directed to Interior Health Authority as all decisions around the staffing, and the option to hire ASP (Alternative Service Providers) lies with them. You may or may not know that this specific issue was raised by all three MLA's from the region with IHA in 2021. You can write to Susan Brown, CEO of IHA directly:

**December/January,** - sent letters addressed to all our MLA suggested and received replies from all within a month but did not receive a reply of our concerns on this matter from Minister of Health Adrian Dix until June 1, 2022 (five months later) due to busy schedule.





**January 2, 2022** – Another serious incident: “Mayor Tom, my hip came out in Silverton and went to New Denver hospital by ambulance. They weren't equipped to help me so arranged for me to go to Arrow Lakes Hospital by ambulance. I lay on a bed from 3pm until 11:30pm until an ambulance arrived from Castlegar and arrived in Nakusp just after midnight. The hip needs to be put back in place within 4 hours, so this was horrific ambulance service. The doctor was concerned about it being out so long but thankfully got it back at 3am this morning. I was very dehydrated and 4 attempts at getting the needles in failed with exploding veins because of dehydration. I was put on a saline drip and had to stay overnight in the hospital, the Dr. went home at 4am. This is all because of disgraceful ambulance service and nothing else. Dr.s and nurses were furious, and I assured them I would tell you about this so you could share it at your meeting. **They all said no one will listen to them”!**

**July 20, 2022** - Meeting on another topic other than BCEHS with our Honorable MLA Katrine Conroy at our ESB building at 10:45am. By coincidence the fire alarm went off at 11:15am! This was a car fire alarm, and I was able to tell our local MLA that we have no ambulance attendants today as they were timed out, and no coverage.

Stated the volunteer road rescue fire dept will take this emergency call, and if require F/aid our volunteers will do their best and rush the patient to the hospital themselves if need be.

Note: These are volunteers and are not paid to assist as paramedic or trained.

They cannot wait for an ambulance to come from Nelson/Kaslo/ Castlegar, as New Denver were on another call!!

**July 27, 2022 - 4:02:04 AM - CODE 3 - defined as an emergency response determined by factors such as immediate danger to officer or public safety that require an expedited priority response utilizing lights and sirens. – The VOLUNTEER** Fire department were paged for help to **ASSIST** with patient as only one paramedic responder available. This was another serious event and again **must stress** this volunteer fire department do not get paid! This happens very frequently since the new SOC system was introduced, depending solely on the local volunteer fire/road rescue department to assist in these traumatic events!

**From October 2021 to July 2022 –** on these serious Assist calls from dispatch to help BCEHS, **the volunteer fire/road rescue department members have had to do CPR on one patient that did not survive. Another motor vehicle accident that they could not wait any longer for an ambulance and had to transport the patient(s) in a police car, fire truck, or there own personal vehicle due to the time it took for an ambulance to arrive** (happens many times). New Denver volunteer fire/road rescue department for example have purchased a tent to help cover and protect the patients from the elements while waiting for an ambulance for hours along the side of a busy hi-way.

These are just one of the many examples of serious assists that we wish to share with you.

Must remember theses assist calls are 24 hours day and night, many of the volunteers have full time jobs in other professions, and the page assist is unknown what the assist event is?

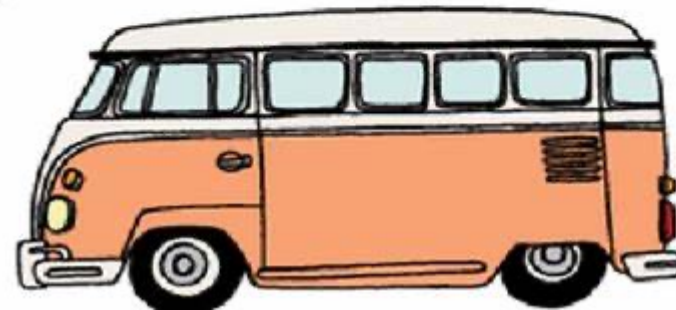
# August Long Weekend Shortfall

**July 29, 2022** - Over this past long BC Day weekend Nakusp and New Denver ambulance/paramedic station had only a lone responder at each station and our local fire departments/Road Rescue and Search & Rescue were having to take up the slack. So, we put on social media that **we recommend when you call for an ambulance you should ask how long the response time will be, and then BCEHS will have to make a decision that is best for you or your loved one.**

Mayor Tom Zeleznik, Village of Nakusp & Mayor Leonard Casley, Village of New Denver

**July 30, 2022** – Informed, **NO Nakusp or New Denver paramedic staff today (Saturday long weekend) as they are timed out.** Will return at 1600 hour with only one lone paramedic responder.

happy  
**LONG WEEKEND!**





This was our third call this weekend that we had to wait on the side of the road for an ambulance to arrive from Nakusp. This photograph is at Enterprise Creek (inside an avalanche zone) and it took 45 minutes waiting for the ambulance to come code 3 from Nakusp. We were able to use this tent for the patient which reduced the heat exposure by 10 degrees for us and the patient. When the Nakusp ambulance arrived the patient was then transported to Trail which was another 2 hours of being on the road for the patient. This makes the Nakusp ambulance out of service and the whole area from angel falls east to trout Lake north to Slocan in the south for at least 8 hours.





On average in a seven-day weekly schedule the Nakusp ambulance/paramedic staffing are not available for an emergency call out or transfer **three out of the seven days**. Either due to paramedics timed out, staffing shortages, lone responder, or have responded to a call to another community leaving no one available at the local station.

This puts enormous pressure on the local fire/road rescue department when a call comes in, as there are no ambulance staff available. Not only are these volunteers being tied up on a medical assist call but puts added pressure on them to fight a fire or car/vehicle accident.

It is common for no ambulance at all to arrive at an emergency scene or arrive hours later. Even though these volunteers are not specifically trained in paramedic service they care and will use whatever means to get the patients to the hospital. We even have two Dr.'s and trained nurses as Volunteer Firemen/Road Rescue and SARS, giving their time.

**BCEHS believes in statistics and is what they use for their reasoning at looking at saving costs instead of lives.** There have recently been less 911 calls to BCEHS in our area as patients that need an ambulance cannot take the risk of calling 911 and dying in their homes due to no paramedic or only one responder or requiring an assist call from the volunteer departments. They are instead taking the risk of driving themselves or calling their neighbors for help!!

As communities across British Columbia struggle with a shortage of both ambulances and paramedics, many volunteer fire departments find themselves filling in the gaps, providing emergency medical services to small towns often situated an hour or more away from the nearest hospital.

Both Mayor Casley and I are saying enough is enough!

“Put these services back in the hands of the community and let us run them and give the people the service they are paying for.” The BCEHS annual budget I believe currently is 560 million +.

As most have watched the movie Jerry Maguire, Tom Cruise uttered the famous line, “Show Me the Money!”

**Remember next time this might be you or your family member when calling BCEHS 911.**

**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH  
WE NEED A SOLUTION!**



# Potential Solutions

- Patient transfers need to be treated/staffed separately from all other Ambulance calls.
- BCEHS to train local emergency volunteer organization members (FD/SAR) as EMRs.
- BCEHS should pay local emergency volunteer organizations or members for responding to BCEHS calls.
- Operating models need to be based on area geography, not statistics – recognize one model won't fit all. SOC won't work in Nakusp – Alpha Model is required for the area.
- Develop new operating models in consultation with small/rural local government. We know our communities' better than anyone else!