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## City of Airdrie Divests Ambulance Service

Airdrie, AB - At their regular meeting on Monday, December 21, 2009, Airdrie City Council decided to terminate the service agreement between the City of Airdrie and Alberta Health Services, divesting Emergency Medical Services on June 30, 2010, resulting in the City of Airdrie operating a stand-alone fire department.

The Government of Alberta has been seeking to have ambulance services transferred to their responsibility from local municipalities to the Alberta Health Services since 2005 (the Calgary Health Region at the time). The City of Airdrie has been working with the Province since 2005 to demonstrate the need, quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of our unique integrated service. Most municipalities in Alberta have separate emergency response services, while a few had fully integrated fire and medical services such as Airdrie.

“Our unique integrated fire and emergency services has been second to none, providing a fully integrated emergency response service where local paramedics and firefighters are trained to respond to both types of emergency calls,” says Mayor Linda Bruce. “Our top-tier emergency response had the capability to provide citizens with great services in an extremely efficient and cost-effective manner. I am extremely disappointed that we have to give our ambulance service to the Province, as we have worked for so many years, investing many tax dollars, to build this great service for our citizens.”

“We have worked diligently with the Province to build a partnership and demonstrate our integrated service works. We presented a few proposals to Alberta Health Services demonstrating that the best route was to use our local expertise and they were turned down,” says Sheldon Leavitt, Airdrie Emergency Services Fire Chief. “Airdrie does not have a hospital, so our top quality emergency service care is essential to our citizens. We know our business and how efficient our integrated services work for our citizens. We did everything we could to prevent the services from being split.”

The Provincial take-over of ambulance services in June 2010, will result in substantial costs in the 2010 and 2011 budgets, primarily due to the loss of revenue from ambulance fees and Provincial grants.

“The negotiations and correspondence with the Province, have shown Alberta Health Services will not support our integrated fire and medical services operating model,” says Bruce. “Knowing this, we have planned in our 2010 budget for the costs of the divestiture of the ambulance services. We are dedicated to working with the Province in the next few months of transition, ensuring no disruption of services to our citizens.”

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