

VILLAGE OF ZEBALLOS

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File: 7100-01 and 0400-20

May 10, 2021

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

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Honourable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
PO BOX 9050 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Re: Concern for the sustainability of BC Ambulance services in the Zeballos area

Dear Minister Dix,

I am writing to you today to plead for the reinstatement of a model of BC Ambulance Services healthcare that suits the needs of small, rural, remote communities. We are the people you serve and are in dire need of sustainable, quality healthcare access like any other BC resident.

The Village of Zeballos is the smallest municipality in BC, with only 107 permanent year round residents located on the territory of the ʔiɪhʔatisath činaɬint First Nation. The First Nations Village of Ehatis is located in the valley adjacent to Zeballos, and the villages of Oclucje, where the Nuchatlaht First Nation resides, and Fair Harbour, with access to Kyuquot are 12 and 37 km away respectively. Zeballos and Ehatis are located at the end of a 42 km unpaved Forest Service Road with active logging. There are limited services and amenities in the Village, meaning residents must travel to larger centres to meet many basic needs, such as specialized medical appointments, hospitals, and major grocery shopping. The nearest commercial centre is Port McNeill, which is 84 km away.

I understand that BC Ambulance has changed to a new model of service within the organization from a call-out with 4 hour pay (also called a KILO guarantee) model of service to Scheduled on Call (SOC) program. This new model would see one regular part time paid position and the rest of the paramedics on call being given pager pay (at \$2/hr). This is concerning to a small community (as noted above) for several reasons including availability of paramedics in community; issues with recruitment and retention, coverage for the area; and safety of our community, the area, its visitors, and workers.

Firstly, the change to an SOC model does not support the sustainable and working health model that the KILO guarantee model provided as this change means a real possibility of fewer shifts covered. The SOC program means zero coverage on weekends, and as few as four ambulance working days where two paramedics are required to staff the car in a month. Zeballos Clinic is open Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5

Sent from the territory of the Ehattesaht Chinehkint First Nation.

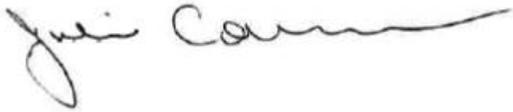
pm. As the nearest ambulance outside of community comes from Port McNeill or Port Hardy stations, that call out time is dramatically increased from 10-20 minutes (attendants available in Zeballos) to upward of two hours. These are life saving minutes.

Secondly, the KILO program guaranteed a living wage for ambulance attendants in community, and when that was not enough, the flexibility to have 12-hour shifts alternate from other jobs and careers they have in community. Zeballos has fought long and hard to keep people working and living here, and just as we see our population increase, our levels of service are going down. This project may be working in larger places but is not sufficient for a remote community such as ours. The KILO guarantee that is in use now has our attendants staffing a car 24/7 and THAT is a full coverage, fantastic model for our communities and beyond.

Lastly, as our ambulance covers the villages of Zeballos, Ehatis, Oclucje, and Fair Harbour; there is a need for reliable services. We are rebranding the Village from resource-based industry to tourism and have many visitors throughout the year. We also are remote, and resource extraction from forestry, mining and fishing are still a large part of the economies in the area. For these reasons, and as our population grows, the call volume and need for service are both increasing.

I put this to you, Mr. Dix, as our health minister. Please protect our communities, and our essential ambulance attendant's livelihoods. I see this move as a catastrophic collapse of a service. We are still in the thick of a global pandemic and are trying to see to the healthcare needs of our residents, the area, and the visitors who are seeking a break from urban locales. Help us do just that by finding a model that works for all the service users.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Colborne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Julie Colborne

Mayor