

July 27, 2020

Reeve Link and Council
Wheatland County
242006 RR243, Highway 1, RR1
Strathmore, AB T1P 1J6

Dear Reeve Link and Council Members;

I hope this letter finds your Council and residents, safe and well during this time of uncertainty. Let us all continue to work together towards a brighter tomorrow!

We are very grateful for the steadfast devotion that Wheatland County provides to STARS, especially in times like these. Like all essential healthcare providers, STARS does not have the option of putting things on hold until life returns to normal, whatever that will mean in the months ahead. The reality is, STARS has experienced a substantial increase in the volume of incoming calls to the Emergency Link Centre in Calgary, since the COVID-19 crisis erupted. Across all six bases in Western Canada, we have seen as high as, 650 incoming calls within one week. Although, we did not fly on all these requests, our STARS air medical crews responded to numerous COVID-related cases, in addition to the daily demands of medical distress like heart attack, stroke, and trauma.

Now with the busy summer season upon us, it also comes with an increase in MVC and ATV types of accidents yet, STARS is also experiencing an increase in calls related to pregnancy complications and distress such as gunshot wounds, and overdose circumstances. Our STARS Transport Physicians and air medical crew provide critical care assistance for rural community healthcare providers and industry-related requests. During the height of the pandemic, by aiding these communities, it may also, have helped to ease the possibility of overwhelming the tertiary care centres. STARS continues to fly an average of 8 missions daily for the communities and rural residents that we proudly serve. Since the outbreak, even though the economy has come to a halt and some continue to be at a stand-still, STARS crews are not among those, indicating the need for continued critical care response, despite the circumstances.

For many, the pandemic has brought on countless hardships, financial and other associated stresses and, we recognize that municipalities are dealing with many difficult circumstances.

This has had an adverse effect on STARS as well. We too have suffered through the heartache of having to downsize several staff members across all six bases. Although, the requests for STARS has increased, our ability to fundraise 80% of the operational funding required, has dramatically decreased. It is understandable that we are seeing a reduction in donations and with the economy being impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is a concern

for us all. This is magnified by the fact that STARS is unable to host most of our fundraising events i.e. golf tournaments, galas and rural community events, for the unforeseeable future. In times like these, we rely on our community partners like you, now more than ever.

Thank you for the life-saving partnership that we share with Wheatland County. Thank you for including us in your annual budgets and recognizing STARS as an emergency protective services asset for your residents. You are a vital part of the *Municipal Initiative Program*, that validates the extraordinary efforts of municipalities, to preserve that the highest level of critical care services will continue to be available to Albertans. Life still happens and STARS will respond.

STARS primary focus is the safety of our crew and our patients to maintain unimpacted operations. We remain diligent and meticulous in our quest to be mission ready and STARS is taking a physician-driven, calculated and gradual approach to a relaunch strategy.

Keeping this in mind, I am hopeful to see you again in-person, within the coming months for your annual update but, for now, current circumstances call for additional options to be made available. If council does not mind waiting to hopefully meet in-person, I will be in contact once travel is approved. If council is interested, I am also accessible through Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Skype so, we always have that to fall back on with so many uncertainties right now. I have included a copy of your 2019 Impact Report as well. I look forward to seeing each of you again.

Take care and stay safe,



Sr. Municipal Relations Liaison

STARS Foundation

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