



Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

Picton, November 16, 2017

MPP Grant Crack, Chair  
Sylwia Przedziecki, Clerk  
Standing Committee on General Government  
Room 1405, Whitney Block  
Queen's Park, Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Haliburton  
Renfrew  
Hastings  
Peterborough  
Kawartha Lakes  
Prince Edward  
Frontenac

Lanark  
Leeds & Grenville  
Prescott & Russell  
Stormont Dundas & Glengarry  
Northumberland  
Lennox and Addington

*Acting in Partnership.*

**Re: Submission to the Standing Committee on General Government on Bill 160**

Dear MPP Crack,

Over the past year, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) has reviewed and discussed the legislative consultation regarding the *Ambulance Act*, including the proposal to enable the Province to pilot firefighter paramedics within Ontario. Following its own review, and discussions with its partners in the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs (OAPC), the EOWC has a number of concerns regarding the proposed changes to the *Act*. These were expressed in a letter sent to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, dated July 26, 2017.

With the Standing Committee on General Government currently meeting to consider Bill 160, *The Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, 2017*, the EOWC would like to reiterate its concerns – and those of its partners in the municipal sector, including AMO, and the OAPC.

The EOWC's key concern with Bill 160 is that the proposed *Ambulance Act* amendments opens the door to the fire-medical model. The EOWC, as well as other municipal governments, have consistently opposed this; however, it seems certain to be implemented despite municipal strong objections and the municipal sector's best advice to the government. Regarding the firefighter paramedics pilot project, the EOWC agrees with its partners that there is still no evidence available from other jurisdictions that such pilots would improve patient outcomes, or that this model works effectively. Yet municipal labour relations issues, risk management issues, and the cost to municipalities from increased fire settlements will all be significant.

In addition, all municipal associations have informed the Province that they did not support moving forward with any pilots. Municipal stakeholders have instead identified significant risks, liabilities, and duplication of services. It is also important to highlight that this concept has never been requested by municipalities and certainly does not address the key priorities for improvement in paramedic service delivery in Ontario, including the review and overhaul of the provincial land ambulance dispatch system.

It is troublesome, despite all of the above, that the government remains committed to proceed with the fire-medical model. Given, however, that it is poised to happen, municipal governments require guaranteed protection from arbitrators. This protection is needed from binding interest arbitration that could replicate and force the pilots on unwilling municipal governments. There is precedence to justify this concern, as it has previously occurred with 24-hour shift pilots imposed on fire departments across Ontario, despite opposition from the municipal employers.





The EOWC cannot emphasize enough that other related legislation must be amended at the same time as the *Ambulance Act*, and therefore supports AMO's proposed concurrent legislative changes to the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* and the *Ambulance Services Collective Bargaining Act*. We understand that all-party support is required to make these amendments as they are in different Acts than Bill 160 opens. On behalf of municipal governments across Eastern Ontario, we implore you to include these amendments in your clause-by-clause deliberations.

Similarly, the EOWC also wishes to reiterate its support for the OAPC's position, in requesting:

1. That the Province respond to the request by municipal stakeholders to address the number one priority with paramedic services in Ontario – fixing and investing much needed technology and process improvements within the dispatch system.
2. That the Province fully examine the changes to the *Ambulance Act* (including any pilots) with a focus on patient risk, quality assurance, and municipality liability/exposure.
3. That prior to any implementation, all affected stakeholders are fully engaged, consulted and that reasonable timelines are put in place to allow for an appropriate system transition (alternative destinations especially).

Furthermore, the EOWC will continue urging the Province to make immediate improvements to the call triaging and dispatch system, as well as addressing the current non-urgent transfer requirements on an emergency service. Both matters are part of the MOHLTC Phase 2 plan to enhance emergency services in Ontario. While the proposed changes on their merits appear progressive, and moving in the direction of improving response to the growing demand for service, the EOWC urges the Province to delay this process until evidence-based solutions may be examined that truly improve the entire continuum of patient care.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Quaiff', is written in a cursive style.

Robert Quaiff  
Chair, 2017, Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

cc: Members of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier  
Hon. Kevin Flynn, Minister of Labour  
Hon. Bill Mauro, Minister of Municipal Affairs  
Hon. Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long Term Care  
Hon. Marie-France Lalonde, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services  
Members of Provincial Parliament representing Eastern Ontario  
MPP Patrick Brown, Leader of the Official Opposition  
MPP Ernie Hardeman, Critic, Municipal Affairs and Housing  
MPP Percy Hatfield, Critic, Municipal Affairs