



Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

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“Enabling New Models of Care for Select 9-1-1 Patients”

Submission to the Ministry of Health regarding Ontario
Regulation 257/00 under the *Ambulance Act* and
Regulation 552 under the *Health Insurance Act*

October 6, 2019

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) Inc. is an incorporated not-for-profit organization comprised of the heads of Council of eleven (11) Counties and two (2) single-tier municipalities in Eastern Ontario. Its members include:

- County of Frontenac
- County of Haliburton
- County of Hastings
- City of Kawartha Lakes
- County of Lanark
- United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
- County of Lennox and Addington
- County of Northumberland
- County of Peterborough
- United Counties of Prescott and Russell
- County of Prince Edward
- County of Renfrew
- United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry



Background

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) works to support and advocate on behalf of the 750,000 taxpayers across rural Eastern Ontario, living within the 13 upper-tier and single-tier municipalities and 90 local municipalities in the region.

The EOWC has a long history of working collaboratively with the Province of Ontario in order to promote shared interests. The EOWC prides itself on its relationship with government, and furthermore, its ability to speak with a unified voice and bring together the entire region of Eastern Ontario at one table. By doing so, we gather the necessary research and provide a portrait of the “situation on the ground,” and help better inform the provincial ministries of the current municipal realities.

Comments

The EOWC represents 12 paramedic services across rural eastern Ontario, which collectively have responded to more than 268,000 calls for service in 2018. In this current year, two in 10 of our residents will call 9-1-1 this year for Paramedic Services to receive critical treatment and support. It is also important to understand that this demand in service represents an increase of 6% from 2017.

Municipally delivered Paramedic Services represent the most cost effective, nimble and responsive service delivery model possible in Ontario. The EOWC and its member municipalities are committed to conducting annual and ongoing service review ensuring maximum efficiency and cost savings through the programs we deliver to our residents and businesses. The delivery of municipally administered paramedic services is the most cost effective and responsive delivery model for taxpayers in Ontario. Changes to the *Ambulance Act*, its governance, or the provincial-municipal funding relationship related to the provision of paramedic services, is of critical importance to the EOWC, its member municipalities and residents.

The EOWC appreciates that the Province has set out to “build a public health care system centred on the patient and redirecting money to front-line services – where it belongs – to improve the patient experience.” We appreciate that these efforts are intended to ensure that “patients and families will have access to faster, better and more connected services in a system in which family doctors, hospitals, and home and community care providers work as a team to cover the patient’s entire circle of care.”¹ The EOWC believes that paramedics are a key component of this circle of care and that modernization of the *Ambulance Act* and provincial dispatch operations are fundamental to enabling a full scope of practice for Paramedics and Community Paramedics, while ensuring that provincial regulations and policies support optimal care options for the residents we serve.

¹ Source: 2019-20 Provincial Budget.

The EOWC welcomes the proposed changes to the *Ambulance Act* that would allow paramedics a broader scope of practice and the creation of alternative destinations (other than a hospital), while broadening their ability to provide on-site medical treatment. These changes would help ensure that patients are consistently getting the right care, in the right setting, without unnecessarily adding to the burden of hallway health care due to the current antiquated and patchwork of legislation.

Recommendations

The EOWC agrees with and supports the stated intention of this government regarding the proposed new models of care. The EOWC recommends that the Ministry of Health (MOH) amend Ontario Regulation 257/00 (O. Reg. 257/00) under the *Ambulance Act* to create clear authority for the ministry, in collaboration with municipal Paramedic Services (ambulance services), to implement “new models of care [that] will help end hallway health care and ensure the delivery of high quality, integrated care.”

Furthermore, it is important that the Province of Ontario acknowledge that municipal paramedic services are ideally positioned on the front line of health care – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – and are eager to embrace new models of care to better serve the needs of their residents.

Paramedics and Community Paramedics must be able to independently:

- Arrange or provide transportation of patients to destinations other than the emergency department where they can receive further treatment;
- Diagnose and treat patients on-site and if necessary, refer them to another health care provider;
- Treat and release patients from their care on-site; and
- Refer select low acuity patients during a 911 call to the most appropriate care options in the community.

Further to the above recommendations:

- The EOWC encourages the government to establish standards, in collaboration with municipalities, for health care professionals (e.g., Paramedics, Community Paramedics and others) to work at ambulance communication centres in order to provide clinical assessment and advice to callers (911 and non-911);
- The EOWC encourages the MOH to enable Paramedics, Community Paramedics and Paramedic Services to directly engage physicians and specialists outside of the current base hospital scheme for the medical delegation of controlled acts;
- The EOWC supports a provision that sets out appropriate performance plans to support the new models of care;

- The provincial dispatch system should be modernized in order to support the recommended changes, including the provision of comprehensive real-time access of dispatch data to Paramedic Services; and
- Funding should be provided to municipalities to support the necessary training, staffing and resources to implement these changes in Paramedic and Community Paramedic practices.

The EOWC would welcome the opportunity to discuss the mechanism for municipalities to charge for the provision of paramedic services, including but not limited to: assessment, treatment, transportation to hospital and non-hospital destinations. We would also like to discuss the creation of a Health Regulatory College of Paramedics under the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, 1991 to regulate the profession in the public interest.

In addition to the proposed care models discussion, it is important that the Provincial Government recognize that the EOWC members have spent the past 22 years fixing the problems that were created when ambulance services were privately operated. Not only is the current public service delivery model superior and most efficient, we are confident that by working closely with this government, we can together best respond to the needs of Eastern Ontario residents.

Conclusion

The EOWC recognizes that change requires innovative thinking, and the development of new approaches, in order to improve service delivery to residents and businesses across Ontario. We share the Government's desire to reduce the overall burden on taxpayers and continues to provide efficient and effective service delivery. The EOWC looks forward to working collaboratively with the Province in order to find new approaches and enhancements to Paramedic Services.

The EOWC would like to take this opportunity to thank the Province for seeking input on advancing the proposed amendments to the *Ambulance Act*, as well as its commitment to expediting the necessary improvements to provincial dispatch operations and technologies. The EOWC is committed to collaborating with the government to modernize Paramedic practices and build upon proven solutions that allow Ontarians to age in the community, contribute to the economy and the social fabric of our society.

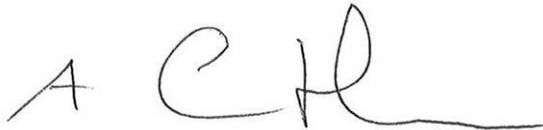
The EOWC strongly recommends that the Province partner with municipalities to scale-up and better integrate cost saving programs such as the expansion of affordable, cost-mitigating activities such as Community Paramedic Programs. Opportunities for integration and partnership exist with the formation of Ontario Health Teams, HealthLinks, Ontario Central Ambulance Communications Centres, Seasonal Surge Programs, Primary Care Teams, and emerging communities of practice, such as palliative care and

the urgent episodic care needs of home and community care clients that would otherwise default to being taken to the emergency department.

An evaluation of Community Paramedic Programs in Eastern Ontario has demonstrated significant reductions in 9-1-1 calls, Emergency Department visits, hospital admissions and hospital readmission rates. Ongoing provincial investments and policy support for new models of Paramedic and Community Paramedic care represent one of the most significant opportunities available to the province to positively impact the pressures of hallway healthcare and save taxpayers money.

As was committed to the Minister of Health during the AMO Conference, the EOWC will continue to be an active partner to inform the Province's review of the public health care system in Ontario, including Paramedic Services. The EOWC looks forward to playing a valuable and collaborative role with the Province of Ontario throughout this review, and welcomes every opportunity to provide feedback and participate in consultations.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Letham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Mayor Andy Letham, 2019 Chair
Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus**