

**THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK**

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**REPORT NO. 2 OF THE  
COMMISSIONER OF COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES**

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**For Consideration by  
The Council of The Regional Municipality of York  
on June 25, 2009**

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**DEDICATED OFF LOAD NURSING PROJECT UPDATE**

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the receipt and expenditure of up to \$416,667 for the fiscal year 2009-2010 (ending March 31, 2010) to be disbursed to York Region hospitals to secure dedicated emergency room nurses aimed at reducing Emergency Medical Services off load delays.
2. Council authorize the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to enter into a Memoranda of Understanding with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and York Region hospitals with respect to the receipt and disbursement of the funding, subject to review by Legal Services.

**2. PURPOSE**

This report seeks Council approval for the receipt and expenditure of \$416,667 from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) for dedicated emergency room nurses to help address Emergency Medical Services (EMS) off load delays.

This report also seeks Council approval to enter into the necessary Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) to implement the continuation of this initiative to reduce EMS off load delays.

### 3. BACKGROUND

In May of 2008, the MOHLTC commenced an initiative to fund selected municipalities in order for area hospitals to acquire dedicated nurses to receive ambulance patients in hospital emergency rooms. This initiative was one of several initiatives announced by the Minister of Health and Long Term Care to improve emergency department wait times. This initiative was specifically focussed on reducing EMS off load delays while other initiatives being administered through the Local Health Integration Networks are focussing on broader system improvement initiatives.

In November 2008, agreements were set in place with Southlake Regional Health Centre, Markham Stouffville Hospital and York Central Hospital to provide twelve hours per day, seven days per week nursing staff for this initiative.

On March 23, 2009, the MOHLTC notified the Region that the Province will be providing one-time funding with respect to the dedicated nursing initiative in the amount of \$416,667 for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The funding continues to represent a short term strategy in an attempt to relieve pressures placed on York Region EMS by off load delays.

### 4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Data collected since the inception of the pilot program in November 2008 demonstrates that having dedicated nursing staff responsible for receiving, treating and managing ambulance-only patients is effective in returning valuable EMS resources back to the community. Other GTA municipalities participating in this initiative were asked for their performance data to permit a comparative analysis however, no data was available at the time of producing this report. Table 1 outlines the results from the three participating hospitals.

**Table 1**  
Initiative Results for November 2008 to March 2009

Hospital	No. of Days with Dedicated Nurses	Nursing Staff Expenses	Ambulance Unit Hours Freed (Nov – Mar)	Gross Value of Ambulance Unit Hours Freed*	Equivalent Ambulance Unit Hours Returned per Day	Percentage of Ambulance Unit Hours Freed of all Off-load Hours	Net Value of Program Savings (hours freed less nursing cost)
Southlake Regional Health Centre	133	\$79,030	1,380	\$214,000	10.4	37%	\$134,970
York Central Hospital	114	\$82,465	951	\$147,375	8.3	22%	\$ 64,910

Markham Stouffville Hospital	109	\$57,650	107	\$ 16,555	1.0	9%	-\$ 41,095
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>\$219,145</b>	<b>2,438</b>	<b>\$377,930</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>\$158,785</b>

\* The approximate cost per hour of paramedic service is \$155.00.

The summary of the number of ambulance unit hours freed to the community is collected from tracking sheets completed by the dedicated nurse whom receives patients from EMS. When a patient arrives by EMS at a facility, the dedicated nurses document the time the patient arrives at the hospital and the time care of the patient is transferred to the emergency department. For example, if the patient arrives at the hospital at 12:00 hours (noon), the transfer of care to the dedicated nurse occurs at 12:20 hours. EMS resources are now able to return to the community. The dedicated nurse documents the time the patient receives a bed in the emergency department of 16:20 hours. The total time the patient was in the care of the dedicated nurse was 4 hours. Without the dedicated nurse receiving the patient, EMS resources would be required to remain with the patients resulting in 4 hours of lost unit hours on off load delay.

While the results for Markham Stouffville Hospital appear to demonstrate minimal improvements in off-load delays, the hospital focused the additional nursing position on improving overall patient flow through the entire emergency department rather than just caring for patients on off load. The success of the approach of the Markham Stouffville Hospital results in a skewed net value calculation.

### **Annualization of the program funding will require a reduction in dedicated nurses staffing levels at hospitals compared to the 2008/09 levels**

As a result of the need to annualize the available funding over twelve months compared to the initial program period of only five months, discussions were held with the three regional hospitals to review strategies to optimize the benefit of the program within the available funding envelope. Southlake Regional Health Centre and York Central will therefore reduce staffing from twelve hours per day, seven days per week to eight hours per day, seven days per week. Markham Stouffville Hospital will reduce staffing from twelve hours per day, seven days per week to eight hours per day, five days per week. The reduction in nursing hour coverage will ensure that staffing costs are maintained within the provincial funding envelope and will continue to be provided until March 31, 2010.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of this initiative continues to be 100% funded by the Province resulting in no additional financial implications to York Region. The approved funding is for the 2009-2010 fiscal year (ending March 31, 2010).

The Region will provide funding to area hospitals in accordance with the MOUs and the hospitals will provide necessary data in order for the Region and the MOHLTC to monitor the effectiveness of this initiative.

## **6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT**

Off load delays are still experienced at all three York Regional hospital emergency departments. The continuation of provincial funding for dedicated nurses deployed in each hospital emergency department has demonstrated to be effective by returning EMS resources available to respond to community requests for service.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The MOHLTC is providing York Region with 100% provincial funding to continue the dedicated nursing initiative. This initiative permits York Region hospitals to secure dedicated nurses to accept EMS patients to reduce off load delays in their emergency departments. The initial evaluation reveals a sizeable number of ambulance hours are freed each day as a result of the initiative, thereby improving the deployment of EMS resources in the Region.

For more information on this report, please contact Norm Barrette, General Manager, at Ext. 4709.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**June 9, 2009  
Newmarket, Ontario**

**J. Simmons  
Commissioner of Community  
and Health Services**

***(Report No. 2 of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services was adopted without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting on June 25, 2009.)***