



July 4, 2022

Via email: [sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org](mailto:sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org)

Hon. Sylvia Jones  
Deputy Premier, Minister of Health  
180 Broadway Ave., Suite A, 3rd Floor  
Orangeville, ON L9W 1K3

Dear Minister:

**Re: Advancing legislative changes and Provincial investment to support effective  
Emergency Health Services in York Region**

York Regional Council has approved the attached [Paramedic Services Master Plan 2021 - 2031](#) to identify future demands and resource needs (such as stations and infrastructure) required to meet the first decade of your government's Growth Plan forecasts for York Region. Demand for paramedic response is forecasted to increase by 119% from 91,625 incidents in 2021 to 163,606 incidents by 2031, representing an annual increase of 6.8%.

**A prospective view to Provincial funding is required to sustain the levels of service that  
meets the needs of a growing and aging population**

The cost of meeting these demands while achieving response time targets will be significant over the period of 2023 to 2031, over-and-above inflationary and cost-of-living adjustments to existing base services. Achieving this will require the Province to include provision for this growth in its commitment to fund Paramedic Services' operating costs at a minimum of 50%.

**Dispatch Modernization will make more efficient use of resources while responding to 911  
service calls**

The Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs have been advocating to make dispatch reform a priority and to deploy all aspects of the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) protocol that has been proven effective in Niagara and Toronto, including the MPDS inter-facility transfer protocol. The Ministry of Health had committed to implementing MPDS however, progress has been slow. The current 911 dispatch system continues to produce over-triaged responses, resulting in unnecessary urgency of response, increasing resource demands, impacting response times for truly urgent calls and putting crews and other drivers on the road at risk. For example, in York Region, in 2021, of the 63,679 calls triaged as urgent, only 26% justified the priority ranking.

Implementing clinician-based call diversion for low priority 911 calls would divert calls where appropriate to another health resource instead of requiring an ambulance to respond. We look forward to your Ministry overcoming persistent delays in implementing MPDS at the Georgian Central Ambulance Communication Centre.

**Enable New Models of Care including Treat and Release/Refer**

The advantages of programs that enable new models of care such as Treat and Release/Refer, and the Palliative Care Patients Receiving Care at Home Program need to be confirmed and fully-funded as practical alternatives.

In York Region, paramedics respond to 21% of incidents that do not require transport to hospital because the patient choose not to seek further medical evaluation or refuse service. In 7% of incidents classified as CTAS 5 (non-urgent), transport to hospital could have been avoided. Authorizing Treat and Release protocols is a best practice that would divert patients from hospital and reduce paramedic time spent at hospital emergency departments.

Amendments to the *Ambulance Act, 1990*, in 2019 provided a starting point to enable alternate models of care and further expansion is still needed to achieve expected efficiencies and effectiveness. We are seeking approval to implement Treat and Release/Refer protocols that will expressly permit paramedics to discharge patients on scene after assessment to enhance resource efficiencies and contribute to the overall health care system effectiveness.

### **Provide Sufficient and Sustainable Funding for Community Paramedicine Programs**

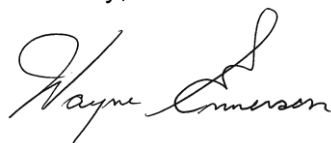
Community Paramedicine programs are currently all pilot projects aimed at filling in gaps that exist in accessing home care and/or primary care in the community. There is also no legislative or policy framework or sustainable Provincial funding to support Community Paramedicine programs. Community Paramedics are responsive and have the unique mobility to provide clinical support to residents in the community, helping to reduce 911 demand. In 2021, the [Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the OAPC](#) submitted joint a letter to the Province advocating that paramedic skills be maximized to be able to provide both emergency and primary care.

While these programs play an integral role in supporting vulnerable populations, Community Paramedicine Programs operate outside of the scope of emergency response services in the *Ambulance Act, 1990*, which governs emergency medical response by paramedics. As a result, many of York Region's Community Paramedicine programs do not have a long-term Provincial policy or funding framework. We are seeking sustainable and predictable Provincial funding for Community Paramedicine programs, as well as a legislative framework that establishes Provincial and municipal roles and responsibilities to ensure paramedics can continue to respond and adapt to emerging needs in the community.

Paramedics have a vital role in the overall well-being of the York Region community. Collaboration across all levels of government is fundamental to finding and implementing optimal solutions to improve emergency response efficiency, effectiveness and outcomes.

Please encourage your staff to follow up with Lisa Gonsalves General Manager, Paramedic and Seniors Services, at 1-877-464- 9675 extension 72090 or by email at [lisa.gonsalves@york.ca](mailto:lisa.gonsalves@york.ca).

Sincerely,



Wayne Emmerson  
Chairman and CEO