



Office of the Commissioner
Community and Health Services Department

Memorandum

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Service

Date: June 15, 2017

Re: **Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Announcement on
Enhancing Emergency Services**

On June 5, 2017, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care announced three proposed changes relating to its initiative Enhancing Emergency Service, a component of the Patients First transformation (see Attachment 1).

The three changes are:

1. Upgrading the call triage system used at Ambulance Communication Centres. The Province has indicated that the call triage system uniquely used in the Niagara and Toronto Centres will be rolled-out at all of the other provincial centres starting in March of 2018. This upgrade has long been sought by the Region, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs as it is proven to more accurately match response priorities to patient needs than the current system.
2. The Province will begin consultation on proposed revisions to the *Ambulance Act* that will allow paramedics to deliver a wider scope of practice including treat and release and treat and refer protocols. These proposed changes would broaden treatment pathways for patients receiving care by paramedics from the current practice of transport to emergency departments alone. These proposed changes are well-aligned with the Region's approach to development and delivery of Community Paramedicine programs such as the Expanding Paramedicine in the Community (EPIC) program.

3. Once the *Ambulance Act* is changed and a regulation is in place, two pilot projects could test the use of firefighters certified as paramedics to respond to both high-acuity and low-acuity calls. Currently they may respond to high-acuity calls.

Once the plans for the dispatch centre upgrade to the Georgian Communication Centre are available, and information is available on the process to consult on the proposed changes to the *Ambulance Act*, staff will report back to Council with an analysis of the implications and benefits to patients and the Region.

Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health
Services

KC/nb

Attachment (1)

#7653182

News Release

Ontario Enhancing Emergency Services Across the Province

Ensuring People Receive Faster Access to the Right Care

June 5, 2017 2:00 P.M. | Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Ontario is enhancing and modernizing its emergency health services system to provide people with increased flexibility and more options for medical transportation and paramedic services, to ensure they are receiving the right care when they need it.

The province is investing in a new medical dispatch system that will help triage and prioritize 911 calls for ambulance services. This new system - which is expected to be in place in the first site by March 2018 - will better prioritize calls based on patient need and redirect low acuity patients to locations other than emergency departments, in instances where it would be safe and appropriate to do so.

The province also plans to update the Ambulance Act through a transparent and inclusive consultation process, to ensure patients continue to receive the right care at the right time. The proposed changes, if passed, would enable the government to:

- Expand the scope of paramedics to provide appropriate on-scene treatment and refer patients to non-hospital options, such as primary care and community-based care. Currently, paramedics are bound by law to transport patients to hospital facilities only. Providing more flexibility would allow patients to receive the most appropriate care while reducing unnecessary trips to emergency departments.
- Provide funding for two pilots in interested municipalities that will enable firefighters certified as paramedics to respond to low acuity calls to treat and release or treat and refer a patient, and provide symptom relief to high acuity calls.

Once implemented, people will experience less overcrowding, shorter wait times and faster movement through the emergency system.

Emergency 911 services will continue to provide immediate response to medical emergencies and may redirect, in a timely and convenient manner, those with non-urgent needs.

Ontario is increasing access to care, reducing wait times and improving the patient experience through its [Patients First Action Plan for Health Care](#) and [OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare](#) -- protecting health care today and into the future.

Quick Facts

- Full roll out to all of the Ambulance Communications Centres across the province will take approximately 24 months to complete.
- Ontario's emergency health system provides around-the-clock services to 13.7 million people each year in more than 400 municipalities and Indigenous communities
- In 2015, over one million patients were transported via land and air ambulance. Of these, only 1 per cent were the most critically ill and required immediate emergency transportation.
- There are patients with varying degrees of severity of illness and injury whose needs could be met by accessing care outside of an emergency department or being transported with non-ambulance resources.

Additional Resources

- [Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care](#)

Quotes



“Our government is committed to improving and modernizing our emergency health services system. Over one million people in Ontario are transported via ambulance each year. By improving the system, we are delivering timely, high quality care across Ontario.”

Dr. Eric Hoskins

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

Media Contacts

Media Line

Toll-free: 1-888-414-4774

media.moh@ontario.ca

GTA: 416-314-6197

David Jensen

Communications and Marketing Division-MOHLTC

media.moh@ontario.ca

416-314-6197

For public inquiries call ServiceOntario,
INFOline

(Toll-free in Ontario only)

ontario.ca/health-news

1-866-532-3161

Laura Gallant

Minister's Office

416-327-4450
