

Land Ambulance Implementation Steering Committee

April 16, 1999 - AMO Boardroom

Meeting No. 3 - Summary Notes

In Attendance:

Roger Anderson, Chair, Region of Durham
Roger Valley, Mayor, Town of Dryden
Dan Ciona, CAO, County of Brant
Mark McDonald, CAO, County of Elgin
Joe Moore, Manager of Emergency Programs, Region of Peel
Alan Craig, EMS Planner, City of Toronto
Vince Judge, Mayor, Town of North Perth
Carol Mitchell, Warden, County of Huron
Marvin Caplan, Regional Councillor, City of Hamilton
Greg Keating, Commissioner of Health & Social Services, City of Chatham-Kent
Brian MacRae, City Manager, City of Thunder Bay
Dave Stewart, Reeve, Village of Cobden
Doug Wuksinic, Region of Sudbury
Joe Tiernay, CAO, County of Peterborough
Mary Kardos Burton, Executive Director, Health Systems, MOH
Graham Brand, Director, Emergency Health Services Branch, MOH
Paul Jones, Director - Local Government Policy Branch, MMAH
John Gross, LSR Project, MOH
Tim Hudak, MPP, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health
Ernie Hardeman, MPP, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing
Pat Vanini, Director of Policy and Government Relations, AMO
Jeff Fisher, Policy Advisor, AMO

Regrets:

Joanne Yelle-Weatherall, Director of Land Ambulance Services, Region of Ottawa-Carleton
James Green, Commissioner of Planning & Economic Development, District of Muskoka
John Cunnane, Public Health Department, Region of Niagara

1. Approval of Summary Notes from the March 4th meeting (Item A):

The summary notes were approved, and will be added to the joint Website.

2. Business Arising from the Second Meeting:

The changes to the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee as requested by AMO have been approved by the Provincial Government

a) Labour Sub-committee:

The Terms of Reference, as distributed were approved. The Chair of the Sub-committee will be John Johnston from the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth. There are three additional municipal members, two MOH staff and an AMO staff person on the Sub-committee. The province may add an MBS staff person to the Sub-committee. The input of MBS is critical to the purpose of this committee.

Action - AMO/MOH staff were directed to begin organizing the Sub-committee, so they can deliberate and report back to the Steering Committee in May.

b) Purchasing Sub-committee Terms of Reference (Item B):

At the last meeting it was felt that there were numerous and complex purchasing issues associated with the transfer of land ambulance services from the Ministry of Health to Upper Tier Municipalities (UTMs) and Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs). Municipalities are going to have difficulty obtaining the same prices the Province has been able to achieve when purchasing vehicles, medical equipment and medicine because of bulk purchasing and tax advantages. It was felt that people with specialized knowledge and expertise in fleet management and purchasing should review these issues, and inform the Steering Committee of their findings.

The Terms of Reference were approved. The Chair of the Sub-committee will be John Cunane from the Region of Niagara. There are three additional municipal members, two MOH staff and an AMO staff person on the Sub-committee.

Action - AMO/MOH staff were directed to begin organizing the Sub-committee, so they can deliberate and report back to the Steering Committee in May.

c) Website Project (Item C):

Status:

The Website for the Committee is www.amo-ehs.com. It is up and running. Provincial and municipal documents are on the Website. The consultant studies from the S.W. Ontario Group and the York/Durham/Halton project will be loaded on the site soon. .../3

One person asked when the table of the LATT recommendations/regulations are going to be included on the Website. Ministry staff indicated that they are still waiting for approvals, but they should receive them soon.

Action - The province will upload the table of the LATT recommendations onto the joint Website as soon as they receive approval.

Other members of the Committee were interested in who was using the site and what questions they were asking. The Ministry at the moment is not tracking this information. But, it does appear that information on the recent announcement did receive most of the hits. It was felt that it would be valuable if the Ministry began to track information from the site.

Action - MOH staff will begin tracking who is using the Website; what questions are being asked (and to whom); and what answers are being given (and their consistency).

The Committee then approved the Website Protocol with the following changes. If there is disagreement on what should be included on the Website, both parties agree to allow the other to upload the information on their own respective sites. It is also agreed that when these disagreements occur, they should be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting. It was agreed that Item eight should be amended, so that items can only be removed from the joint site when both parties agree to it.

d) The Land Ambulance Practical Guide:

The Ministry's "Tool Kit" will now be called the *Land Ambulance Practical Guide*. The Ministry is on target to meet the May deadline. It will also be updated to reflect the changes stemming from the recent provincial announcement.

Action - The *Land Ambulance Practical Guide* will be ready by the mid-May.

e) Crown Operators and OPSEU Negotiations:

The Ministry asked what involvement the Committee or AMO wanted in the negotiations. Neither AMO or the municipal members of the Steering Committee wanted direct participation, but they did request that MOH debrief the Steering Committee throughout the negotiations. Paul Jones indicated that he has been asked to provide the municipal perspective to MBS.

Action - The Ministry of Health will debrief and update the Committee regarding the status of the negotiations.

f) Tax Assessment and Census Data for Unincorporated Areas

MMAH staff briefed the Committee on the status of tax assessment and census data for the North. OPAC has refused to give any tax assessment data to MMAH, but as of April 1, 1999, it was available in local MCSS offices. The Committee was assured by MMAH and an OPAC Board member that the Corporation will finish the assessment in the North

MMAH argued that election lists and the assessment could be used for census purposes. There was some disagreement about the ability of school boards to tax in the North. There was also concern that the assessment, election and other government data do not match each other. And, the data that is available is not what is needed by municipalities to plan land ambulance systems.

Action - MMAH officials have agreed to work with Roger Valley, the Mayor of Dryden on the tax assessment and census issue. They will report back at the next Committee meeting.

g) Call Release Data (Item D):

MOH staff conducted a survey regarding the call data they have sent out in the past. They received 14 responses out of 39 surveys sent out. The response was varied. There were a few municipalities that had problems with the disks, and the Ministry will be contacting those municipalities soon to resolve those issues.

The revised disk will be sent out in two weeks. The Ministry is just waiting for final approvals. Call data will be included from the last four years on the CDs. There will also be adjustments made to the front end, so the information can be accessed more easily.

Some municipal members said that their Regional Managers were unaware that this information was coming. MOH will update their managers about the forthcoming data. Municipal members asked whether they can have their Regional Managers assist them in using the CDs, running the reports and interpreting the data when the information comes. They felt that with all the competing commitments Regional Managers are experiencing now, that a directive needs to be sent out explaining the importance of training municipal officials on the use of the CDs. MOH officials agreed, but felt that most municipalities will not have difficulty accessing information from the CDs.

Municipal officials were still concerned about the integrity of the data.

One Northern municipal official asked who would be receiving information in the North. MOH officials will review their Northern distribution list.

Action - MOH will be sending out CDs with call data from the last four years to UTMs and CMSMs and a modified front end in the next two weeks. They will send out a directive to Regional Managers informing them of the forthcoming CDs, and directing them to assist municipalities to use the CDs. MOH officials will also contact municipalities that informed them that they were having problems with previous data.

h) Freedom of Information and Privacy Act:

The Province will not be able to release its client data to municipalities because of the *Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FIPA)*. When municipalities begin to collect data, they will be able to use it within the confines of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act.

The Ministry also discussed access to operator data. In previous cases they went through the FIPA process, but before it was completed the operator agreed to release the data.

I. OPAL Study:

No report.

Action - The Province will raise this issue at the first OPAL Steering Committee meeting after the next readiness check if it is necessary.

3. Recent Provincial Announcement (*Item E*):

Roger Anderson, Municipal Co-chair of the Committee said municipalities were generally happy with the provincial announcement, but still felt that this service should be completely removed from the property tax base.

One municipal official asked whether the announcement was revenue neutral because CRF funding has decreased. It was noted that for municipalities that had CRF, there was not a 100% clawback. For every dollar funding the province invested into land ambulance, only 85 cent was removed from the CRF.

One municipal official pointed out that the CRF was not providing municipalities incentives for reducing costs because any saving meant lower CRF funding in the future. There was also concern that the 15% bonus municipalities received may not last more than three years. It may not be a recurring revenue. A provincial official noted that there is only a three year commitment for the CRF. After that, the levels could be frozen. It will be up to future governments.

Other municipalities were concerned that the Province might use this funding to control the process. It was asked whether the Province would prevent municipalities from improving the service. With the possible integration of emergency services, more money may have to be shifted to land ambulance. They would like the province to pay their 50% share of the increased ambulance costs. At the very least municipalities should be allowed to make the changes they feel need to be made.

One municipal official argued that the province needs to trust municipalities and treat them as partners. For various reasons the costs of ambulance service are going to increase over the next few years, but municipalities will be responsible. They have to because they are obligated to cover 50% of any increases in the ambulance budget. If they want to improve the service by adding more ALS paramedics, they should be assisted by the province.

Municipal officials wanted to ensure that the province understood that one size does not fit all. What is acceptable in Toronto may not work in the North. One municipal official wanted to ensure that municipalities will not be forced to improve service - especially in rural areas that have volunteer services. Right now employers only have to worry about one to four calls a month, but if this increases to one to four calls a week, volunteer departments may have trouble having local businesses agree to have their employees on volunteer departments.

In terms of the extension, the final date for municipal assumption of the service is January 1, 2001. Municipalities may have to give the province 90 days notice as to when they will assume the service, so the last date to notify the province of how municipalities intend to deliver the service is September 30, 2000. Decisions regarding these dates have not been finalized. The Ministry will still continue to deliver services in areas where it presently runs ambulances directly. Municipalities will be able to continue to access the Judson Street Stores until January 1, 2001 - even if they assume ambulance services early in the process.

The dates for municipalities assuming severance and compensation obligations have not changed. It is still January 1, 2000. The province was concerned that municipalities may opt for the last day of the transfer to save money on severance and compensation obligations. Municipal officials felt this would not be a reason for delay. There is a desire in many communities to move on. Local officials just want to ensure that the transition is smooth.

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One municipal member asked whether municipalities will have to negotiate with their operators, or will the Province. Regional Managers do not have the answer to this question. The Province will ask municipalities what role they wish to play in the negotiating process.

Another official was concerned that they would lose access to provincial severance money if they used their present providers. MOH officials said this was false. Municipalities will have access to severance and operator provincial funds for up to January 1, 2000 whether they use their present providers or not.

Action - MOH officials will post information on the Website regarding municipal obligations for employee severance, time extensions, and operator compensation.

The issue of inter facility transfers was raised. Municipalities cannot control these costs because physicians order ambulances for patients who do not need them. Municipalities are also concerned that because they are the most accessible level of government, they will be blamed when ambulances are late for non-emergency transfers when in fact many people who are being transferred by hospitals do not need ambulances. Provincial officials argued that they receive complaints when patients that need ambulances for these trips do not get them. They said that municipalities should work with MTO on developing Non Ambulance Medical Transportation. They should also work through DHCs to raise hospital awareness on this issue. Municipal representatives felt that they do not have the influence the province does because of they do not pay physicians or hospitals.

One rural official expressed concern about the status of a handi bus service in his area. This service is paid for by users and the municipality. It may not survive budget cuts. Its use could create savings for the province and the municipality. He wanted to know whether the Province would allow municipalities to use this service and include it in the 50/50 formula. The Province agreed that this service could be used for non-ambulance medical transportation, but they would not fund it because it was not an ambulance cost.

MOH officials indicated that the 50% funding does not mean that the province will be micro managing the budgets or the process. But, at the same time they need to establish a process to ensure accountability for funds. Municipalities were concerned that Regional Managers were taking the view that the Province was going to micro manage the process.

Action - MOH will write a letter to their Regional Managers that will establish the role of Regional Managers and MOH throughout the process. The letter will be copied to AMO, UTMs and CMSMs.

One municipal official asked whether municipalities could approve provincial spending of their money on the ambulance service between now and January 1, 2001. At the moment Councils have an opportunity to be involved in the decision making process for new expenditures of over \$5000.

Municipal representatives were concerned about how the extensions were going to be implemented. Provincial officials said the province is committed to introducing legislation to extend the deadlines, but they do not know when this will happen. One person said that if it is not passed by September the failsafe section in the legislation could be used. Others were concerned that this would make municipalities look uncommitted to the service in the public's eyes.

Action - MOH officials will report back on options should legislation not be passed regarding extensions. Information will be posted on the joint Website.

There was some concern that the ambulance costs in the LSR were underestimated. Municipalities are concerned about what is included (and not included) in "Approved Budgets".

Action - AMO and MOH staff will strike up a sub-committee that to review the ambulance budgeting issue, and report back to the next Steering Committee meeting. Information will be posted on the joint Website.

4. Dispatch (*Item F*):

Provincial officials indicated that the government is happy with the work of the Steering Committee. They would like to hold off the dispatch decision until the Committee can advise them on how to proceed. This is now possible because of the recent extensions that were announced. It is clear that not all municipalities want to run dispatch. The Province wants to create a seamless system, and this means that they do not want every CMSM and UTM to run a dispatch centre. At the same time the Province is concerned about creating Special Purpose bodies to run dispatch because of traditional municipal opposition to SPBs. The Province understands why municipalities want to manage dispatch, but more information is needed.

The Municipal representatives agreed that more information is needed. They would like information on the Price Waterhouse Coopers report and the Ontario Mobile Communications Project.

Action - MOH officials will present the findings of the Price Waterhouse Coopers report and information on the Ontario Mobile Communications Project at the next Steering Committee meeting.

A municipal official said that he recognized the Provincial concern about seamlessness, but said this is the inherent problem with moving this service to the municipal level. Ambulances cross numerous borders. It is difficult to provide seamlessness. At the same time there will be no accountability or cost control if municipalities do not manage dispatch.

It was also pointed out that seamlessness does not occur in Ontario now. Many hospitals in the Province refuse to take patients from outside their area. There were also questions regarding the province wide compatibility of ambulance radio equipment.

There are also problems with dispatch now. One municipal official recently rode in an ambulance, and had many concerns. The dispatch centre was asked to notify the hospital that a smoke inhalation patient was arriving. The message was never passed onto the hospital. In addition he found that fire trucks were dispatched too late. Many times the closest ambulance was not sent, and no one can question the dispatchers.

Municipalities would like to improve the system and save money. One way would be to take paramedics who have WSIB covered injuries and use them as dispatchers. They have good experience, and WSIB costs will be reduced.

It was argued that if municipalities will not be able to manage dispatch, they should be part of the governance structure.

Committee members wondered whether inter facility transfers should be part of the emergency dispatch system.

It was felt by municipalities that an independent Due Diligence report should be conducted to assess the present system. Municipalities argued that such a report would benefit the government - no matter who managed dispatch in the end. The Ministry is aware of these issues, but has not addressed them because the issue of who will manage dispatch has not been decided.

Action - AMO and MOH staff will work on Terms of Reference for a Due Diligence report. They will also provide three possible independent Communications consultants to conduct the study.

5. State of Readiness (*Item G*):

It was felt that the multi-UTMs in Southern Ontario will not have decision until the fall of 1999 - not Spring of 1999 as stated on the sheet. At this time Peel feels that they should be listed as January 2001 - not the first quarter of 2000 as the Ministry report says.

Several municipal officials said that they were not contacted regarding the State of Readiness report even though they are the people in charge of ambulance services for their municipalities.

Action - MOH and AMO officials will work on land ambulance municipal contact list and distribute it at the next Steering Committee meeting. This will be the list that the Ministry and AMO use to distribute information and conduct surveys in the future. They will work on questions for the next survey that will be conducted by MOH in June. They should be tabled at the next Steering Committee meeting. Questions will include whether municipalities want to participate in the extension negotiations with Operators.

The Ministry then discussed the process for designating municipalities to manage land ambulance services. The process is further along in the South than it is in the North, but more work still needs to be done in Southern Ontario.

Action - MOH officials will update the committee regarding issues relating to how municipalities will be designated in Southern Ontario to run land ambulance services.

In the North the Province is at the stage where it is educating municipalities about the service. There are no time lines at present regarding when delivery agents will be designated.

Northern officials want to ensure that the province not appoint municipalities to run land ambulance without consensus. It is doubtful that ASBs will be created in the near future, and these are the only bodies in the North that must run land ambulance services. There was concern that DSSABs already have too much on their plates now with welfare, social housing and child care responsibilities. It should not be forgotten that many are only one month old.

Action - MOH and AMO staff will organize a sub-committee to review northern land ambulance issues.

6. Other Business:

One member of the Committee asked about the status of LATT. The province indicated that a meeting would be called soon.

Members were concerned about how cross boundary billing disputes would be handled. There is no legislation dealing with this issue. At the moment the cross border billing issues are being addressed through the government billing and funding process. Regulations are proposed to provide UTM's and Delivery Agents with access to arbitration for any issues between them for when municipalities deliver the service. It is preferred by all parties that municipalities reach agreements with their neighbour for reconciling land ambulance costs. The Ministry will provide ambulance call information regarding cross boundary service.

Municipal representatives from communities where there are numerous hospitals (i.e. Toronto, Hamilton, London and Sudbury) were concerned that their communities have to pay the costs for inter facility trips, and the cost to return non-residents home to the rural communities that surround the cities. Rural representatives were concerned that their ambulances are lost to those urban centres for the whole day when they drop of a patient.

The next meeting will be in the AMO Boardroom on May 18th at 10:30 a.m..

Action - AMO staff will ask Jim Green, Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development for the District of Muskoka, to do a presentation on their recent RFP experience.