

REGION OF OTTAWA CARLETON  
 RÉGION D'OTTAWA CARLETON

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REPORT  
 RAPPORT

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RC

DATE 16 February 1999

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator  
 Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Medical Officer of Health  
 Director, Land Ambulance Health Services

SUBJECT/OBJET **LAND AMBULANCE HEALTH SERVICES-CONTINGENCY  
 OPTIONS**

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### **DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That Community Services Committee recommend Council:**

- 1. Reiterate its request to the Provincial Government to transfer control of dispatch to the Region and to provide adequate funds to cover the cost of dispatch; to cover the real cost of the existing poor level of service and to cover the cost of increasing the level of service to meet acceptable response time standards.**
- 2. Advise the Minister of Health that the Region of Ottawa-Carleton will not be able to develop a performance based system for 1 January, 2000, because of the Province's refusal to organize an orderly transfer of dispatch.**
- 3. Direct staff to advise Expression of Interest respondents that the process is on hold until the Region of Ottawa-Carleton gets an answer on the question of dispatch from the Ministry of Health and/or makes a revised policy decision on the direction for the delivery of service in the year 2000.**
- 4. Direct staff to pursue one of the options as presented at the 4 March 1999 Community Services Committee meeting, as a contingency, if the Province does not include the essential component of dispatch in the download of this critical health service to the Upper Tier Municipalities.**
- 5. Forward a copy of this report to all Upper Tier Municipalities, the Minister of Health, the Premier, local MPP's and MP's, and to members of the Land Ambulance Health Services Consultation Group.**

## BACKGROUND

The Region of Ottawa-Carleton has worked diligently for almost a year to prepare for the full assumption of land ambulance services in the year 2000. Unfortunately the Province has not responded to the Region's numerous requests to include dispatch in the downloading. Furthermore, the Province has ignored two deadlines previously agreed upon for an answer to the Region's question of "yes" or "no" can we have dispatch? (31 January 1999 and 12 February 1999).

The independent audit of response times commissioned by the Region of Ottawa-Carleton revealed very poor response times for emergency life threatening calls in our community. The Province has allotted \$12.5 Million for the current level of poor service. Ministry staff have verbally, on a number of occasions, indicated that the real cost of this current service is much higher, likely 30% to 40% more. The residents of Ottawa-Carleton deserve a decent ambulance service. It is estimated that a good service will cost between \$20 and \$25 Million dollars.

## INTRODUCTION

Without control of dispatch the Region of Ottawa-Carleton has no control over quality or cost. In essence, the Province has set up a system for the year 2000, where Upper Tier Municipalities (UTM) provide the ambulances, paramedics and equipment, and the Provincial government will use these however they see fit (both inside and outside of our Region). All, of course, funded by the Region of Ottawa-Carleton residents' property taxes.

## DISCUSSION

It is not possible to run a cost efficient, high quality ambulance system without control of dispatch. However, the Region of Ottawa-Carleton is committed to improve the quality of pre-hospital health care and to provide the citizens of Ottawa-Carleton with the level of service they deserve. However, the Region has been unable to get an answer from the Provincial government. This has very serious implications on the process and timelines that Regional Council directed staff to follow, and, more importantly, the health and safety of the residents of our community.

Without control of dispatch the Region of Ottawa-Carleton cannot:

- have a performance based system.
- control costs
- control the quality of care provided to patients
- ensure full Advanced Life Support (ALS) coverage
- hold anyone clearly accountable
- control where its ambulances are both inside and outside of the Region
- plan for the use of Advanced Life Support or Basic Life Support Paramedics
- control response times
- make significant improvements to what currently exists.

At the time this report is being written Regional staff are reviewing all possible contingency options and their implications. These will be presented for consideration at the 4 March 1999 Community Services Committee meeting. None of the contingency options will be desirable and should only be considered if the Region of Ottawa-Carleton cannot obtain control of dispatch and additional funds. Each of the contingency options will have serious medical and economical drawbacks for the residents of our community.

Once again, it cannot be emphasized enough that staff will very reluctantly put forward contingency options for Committee and Council's consideration. All efforts should continue to be made to obtain control of dispatch and additional funds in the download equation. It is what the residents and visitors deserve.

*Approved by*  
*Robert Cushman, MD, MBA, FRCPC*

*Approved by*  
*Joanne Yelle-Weatherall*