

**CITY OF HAMILTON**

**HAMILTON EMERGENCY SERVICES**  
*Emergency Medical Services*

<b>TO:</b> Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> March 19, 2012	
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> Dedicated Offload Nurses to Receive Ambulance Patients in Hospital Emergency Departments (HES12005) (City Wide)	
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b> Brent Browett Director, Emergency Medical Services Paramedic Chief Hamilton Emergency Services	<b>PREPARED BY:</b> Brent Browett (905) 546-2424 ext.7741
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) That the Emergency Medical Services Director of Hamilton Emergency Services be authorized and directed to enter into an agreement in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to receive a grant which will fund the staffing of nurses that will be dedicated to receiving and managing the care of ambulance patients in the local hospital emergency departments to reduce the ambulance wait times, for the period of April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 or such longer or shorter period agreed to by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.
- (b) That the Emergency Medical Services Director of Hamilton Emergency Services be authorized and directed to negotiate and enter into the necessary agreements between the City of Hamilton and Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Hospital, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, to reimburse those organizations for the payment of staffing the nursing hours dedicated to receiving and managing the care of ambulance patients in the emergency departments.

- (c) That the Emergency Medical Services Division be directed to utilize the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care grant to pay for all direct and supporting costs for staffing of nurses that will be dedicated to receiving and managing the care of ambulance patients in the local hospital emergency departments to reduce the ambulance wait times, for the period of April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 or such longer or shorter period agreed to by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in accordance with the terms set out in the agreement with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Emergency Medical Services Division (EMS) was invited by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) to submit a business case, which would support the continuation of the EMS-Hospital Dedicated Registered Nurse (RN) project, from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 or such longer or shorter period agreed to by the MOHLTC.

The business case submitted to the MOHLTC that covers the period includes a grant request of \$1,307,730 based on the past year's submission. This would provide dedicate offload-flow RN coverage 12 hours a day, 7 days a week at the three (3) local hospital emergency departments all year and the opportunity for 24 hour coverage for approximately 10 months of the year.

The dedicated offload RN project is intended to assist the ambulance service in the containment and ideally the reduction in the time to complete the "transfer of care" of paramedic service patients in the local emergency departments.

In 2008, when the MOHLTC introduced dedicated ambulance offload RNs for 14 large municipalities, the City of Hamilton (City) was provided with a \$375,000 provincial grant and the authority to negotiate agreements, with local hospitals, to have dedicated nurses to receive ambulance patients at hospital emergency departments. The program was renewed by the MOHLTC for the period of April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010 and the City was given a grant of \$416,677 which was sufficient funds to operate the program for the five (5) busiest months of the year. For the period of April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011 the City was given a grant of \$788,427 which was sufficient funds to operate the program for the nine (9) busiest months of the year. For the period of April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012 the City was given an initial grant of \$788,427 which was sufficient funds to operate the program in three (3) sites for 12 months and for the last four months of the program an additional grant of \$173,101 was made available.

Hamilton EMS and the area emergency departments believe that the dedicated offload flow nurse program has been one of the many essential tactics to contain the EMS-hospital transfer of care interval. The funds and the agreements for the hospital offload RN project end on March 31, 2012.

Anticipating that the MOHLTC will provide some level of grant funding, staff is seeking Council approval to continue to participate in this project pending confirmation of the MOHLTC funding for the next year. Staff is seeking Council direction to take all reasonable steps to renew agreements with Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Hospital to maintain the dedicated nurses in the emergency departments for the period of April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 or such longer or shorter period agreed to by the MOHLTC for the applicable hours based MOHLTC grant funding for the dedicated offload program during that period.

***Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable***

**FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS** (for Recommendation(s) only)

**Financial:**

The MOHLTC has committed to funding 100% of approved costs to reimburse the hospitals for agreed to nursing hours and rates. The nursing hourly rates and the nursing hours must be approved by the MOHLTC and agreed to in writing with the hospitals affected. The risk to the City would be if the hospitals or the MOHLTC despite written agreements attempted to modify their rates or hours without agreement of the City. The City of Hamilton is responsible for any in-kind data support which may arise from time to time.

**Staffing:**

EMS Managers will continue to oversee, measure, and ensure that the hospitals meet their contractual obligations to the City. The EMS Platoon Commanders-Managers will interface with key hospital staff on a regular basis, monitoring the dedicated offload RN staffing as well as the utilization of the dedicated nurses.

**Legal:**

The City will be required to renew or extend the agreement with the MOHLTC to receive the grant and participate in the project and also renew or extend the agreement with each participating hospital for the delivery of nursing services.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** (Chronology of events)

Lengthening 'ambulance wait time' intervals was first noted in Hamilton in 2003, and it has been one of the greatest challenges facing EMS to maintain an appropriate

emergency response time, contain the cost of the service, and address the work place hygiene of the paramedics.

Staff met with the MOHLTC and hospital officials on a regular basis analyzing the multitude of contributing factors, and there have been numerous local collaborative solutions implemented to address this matter. This is continued to be recognized as an international phenomenon and it requires multi-faceted, short, medium and long-term solutions and having dedicated ambulance offload RNs in the emergency departments continues to be important strategy.

The dedicated offload RN concept is predicated on hospital nurses having the most appropriate level of training to care for patients in the hospital setting for prolonged periods of time, and, that it is regular practice for the patient to nurse ratio to be 5 to 1 (subject to the patient condition).

The current staffing of dedicated offload nurses at the three (3) local hospital emergency departments is scheduled to end on March 31, 2012 unless there are continued agreements. Given the results of the program and limited risk to the City, staff is recommending that the City continue to participate in this project and take all necessary and reasonable steps to renew agreements with Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Hospital to maintain the dedicated nurses in the emergency departments from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 or such longer or shorter period agreed to by the MOHLTC.

If the staff recommendations are approved, staff will undertake the following steps:

- 1) Staff will confirm and finalize an agreement renewal with the MOHLTC;
- 2) Staff will undertake to reach extended agreements with the local hospitals with the support of the Budgets & Finance and Legal Services Divisions;
- 3) Staff will confirm that the hospitals have hired appropriate nursing staff;
- 4) Staff will continue the program and measure and adjust it as necessary.

#### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Any applicable Purchasing Policies will be applied in purchasing the service from the hospitals.

#### **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

Corporate Services Department, Budgets & Finance Division, Lorraine Paddon  
Corporate Services Department, Risk Management Division, John McClennan

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City Manager's Office, Legal Services Division, Don Fisher  
City Manager's Office, Human Resources Division, Nenzi Cocca

**ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

(include Performance Measurement/Benchmarking Data, if applicable)

Since introducing the EMS-Hospital Dedicated Registered Nurse (RN) project in November 2008, EMS has contained the EMS-hospital transfer of care interval relative to what it would otherwise be. While there are many variables that affect paramedic service demands, staff believes that the program has positive results and recommends continuing to participate.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

The MOHLTC has not offered any alternative use for this grant funding. The City could choose not to participate in this project. However, if this option is exercised, it could be expected that the EMS-hospital transfer of care interval would elongate increasing the probability of a relative increase in the frequency of Code Zero ambulance events.

**CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN (Linkage to Desired End Results)**

Focus Areas: 1. Skilled, Innovative and Respectful Organization, 2. Financial Sustainability, 3. Intergovernmental Relationships, 4. Growing Our Economy, 5. Social Development, 6. Environmental Stewardship, 7. Healthy Community

***Skilled, Innovative & Respectful Organization***

- ◆ A culture of excellence
- ◆ A skilled, adaptive and diverse workforce, i.e. more flexible staff
- ◆ More innovation, greater teamwork, better client focus
- ◆ An enabling work environment - respectful culture, well-being and safety, effective communication
- ◆ Opportunity for employee input in management decision making

***Financial Sustainability***

- ◆ Financially Sustainable City by 2020

- ◆ Delivery of municipal services and management capital assets/liabilities in a sustainable, innovative and cost effective manner

- ◆ Generate assessment growth/non-tax revenues

***Intergovernmental Relationships***

- ◆ Influence federal and provincial policy development to benefit Hamilton

- ◆ Acquire greater share of Provincial and Federal grants (including those that meet specific needs)

- ◆ Maintain effective relationships with other public agencies

***Growing Our Economy***

- ◆ Newly created or revitalized employment sites

- ◆ An improved customer service

***Social Development***

- ◆ Residents in need have access to adequate support services

***Environmental Stewardship***

- ◆ Reduced impact of City activities on the environment

- ◆ Reduce the impact of Hamilton's industrial, commercial Private and Public operations on the environment

- ◆ Aspiring to the highest environmental standards

***Healthy Community***

- ◆ Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety, work, recreation and support for all (Human Services)

**APPENDICES / SCHEDULES**

None