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Hamilton Paramedic Service
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May 25, 2023

Hon. Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
College Park, 5th Flr
777 Bay St., Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

SENT VIA EMAIL: sylvia.jones@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Jones:

As Chief of the City of Hamilton Paramedic Service I am well aware of the pressures placed upon your Ministry, and on the Ontario public service, in creating and sustaining emergency ambulance dispatch system performance. The City of Hamilton and Hamilton Paramedic Service share the Ministry of Health's priority to ensure best possible use of health and human resources and to implement optimal operating models that lead to effective and efficient operations for community residents and taxpayers.

I am writing to share with you the critical need and opportunity for Hamilton Paramedic Service to improve emergency medical response within Hamilton and am asking for your support for Hamilton Paramedic Service to assume operational responsibility for the Hamilton Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) currently operated directly by the Province.

Modernization of ambulance dispatch and communications is integral to the operation and performance of the City of Hamilton land ambulance service and will benefit residents, Hamilton and regional hospitals and health providers. The current direct Ministry operated model imposes constraints on dispatch staffing and operations, results in poor utilization of our scarce paramedic resources, prevents us from advancing innovation with our Ontario Health Team and hospital and community partners, and continues to negatively impact the delivery of our land ambulance service daily. We have raised these concerns many times over the past several years directly with senior Ministry staff.

As background, of the 22 ambulance dispatch centres operating under Ministry of Health authority, half are directly operated by the Province and half are operated under contract with the Ministry through Transfer Payment (TP) agreements. Dispatch performance, flexibility and agility within the required operating parameters, and the recruitment and retention of the valuable ambulance communications officers is, in my view and that of my peers, significantly better within these transfer payment centres, particularly where they are aligned with the operation and management of the land ambulance services they dispatch.

The City of Hamilton is concerned about these issues from both a service and fiscal lens and has endorsed Hamilton Paramedic Service pursuing direct operation of the Hamilton CACC through a transfer payment agreement and performance contract as one element of our 10 Year Strategic Plan. We believe direct operation will improve performance, flexibility, adaptability, and innovation at a rate not possible within the existing structure. A key innovation focused on reducing unnecessary transports to hospitals, thereby reducing pressures on emergency departments in a clinically safe manner, is the implementation of a clinical hub. We have engaged our Ontario Health Team (Greater Hamilton Health Network) and Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Health System hospital leadership and other partners and they are supportive of moving this forward. However, we are unable to do so in the current construct.

This improved alignment of operations will better improve our capacity to improve our responsibility for ensuring the proper provision of land ambulance services in the municipality in accordance with the needs of persons in the municipality.

We have discussed this proposal to assume responsibility for the operation of Hamilton CACC with the other land ambulance services also dispatched by that centre, including Brant-Brantford, Haldimand County, Norfolk County, and Six Nations and they are in agreement with us pursuing a contractual relationship to do so.

Further, we have the support of the Hamilton Police and the Hamilton Fire Services as they identify the benefits of better collaboration and resource utilization within our municipal boundaries.

In accordance with your authority under the Ambulance Act, I am formally requesting your support for this proposal and direction to the appropriate Ministry Staff to begin engagement with Hamilton Paramedic Service to negotiate transfer of responsibility for the Hamilton CACC to the City of Hamilton.

I would be pleased to meet to discuss background to this proposal and the requested direction at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Sanderson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Sanderson, MStJ, MHSc, BA, A-EMCA, CMM III
Chief, Hamilton Paramedic Service

cc: Janette Smith, City Manager, City of Hamilton
Angela Burden, General Manager, Health and Safe Communities