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OPTIMIZING SERVICES DELIVERY – 2009 PARAMEDIC GROWTH REQUEST

(Regional Council at its meeting on February 19, 2009 adopted this Clause as follows:

- 1. Regional Council approve an additional six full-time Paramedic positions to increase service hours at the Pepperlaw Paramedic Response Station, in the Town of Georgina, from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day at an additional cost of \$658,000 to be fully offset by additional provincial funding.***

The Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee recommends that:

- 1. Consideration of the additional paramedic positions to increase service hours at the Pepperlaw Paramedic Response Station be referred to the 2010 budget for consideration, subject to completion of an analysis of results of the 2009 proposed budget increase of paramedic positions to the Mount Albert Paramedic Response Station.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- 1. Regional Council approve an additional six full-time Paramedic positions to increase service hours at the Pepperlaw Paramedic Response Station, in the Town of Georgina, from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day at an additional cost of \$658,000 to be fully offset by additional provincial funding.**

2. PURPOSE

On January 8, 2009, the Community and Health Services Department identified a funding opportunity as part of its budget presentation to Committee, to apply new provincial Emergency Medical Services (EMS) funding to increase service hours at the Pepperlaw Paramedic Response Station from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day. This report formally presents this opportunity to Committee for their consideration.

This report also provides information arising from Committee's enquiries regarding the feasibility of increasing the current 12 hour per day staffing at the Mount Albert Paramedic Response Station, located in the Town of East Gwillimbury, and the Pepperlaw Paramedic Response Stations to 18 hour per day staffing.

3. BACKGROUND

Additional provincial funding creates an opportunity to address service demand and provide 24 hour on-site staffing at the Pepperlaw Paramedic Response Station

In December 2008, the Province advised the Region of an additional \$1.6 million to its EMS base funding for 2009. Because of the timing of this announcement, this increased funding could not be included in the Department's 2009 budget request.

Through the Department's budget presentation to Committee on January 8, 2009, staff noted this funding increase and offered an option for its application.

Currently, all but three of York Region's 19 Paramedic Response Stations are staffed 24 hours per day. The Mount Albert, Pepperlaw and Ballantrae (located in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville) Paramedic Response Stations are staffed 12 hours per day at peak service demand.

Through its 2009 budget submission, the Department has requested six full-time Paramedic positions to increase staffing from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day at the Mount Albert Paramedic Response Station.

As part of the budget presentation, staff also proposed that \$658,000 of the additional \$1.6 million provincial funding be used to fund an additional six full-time Paramedic positions to increase staffing from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day at the Pepperlaw Paramedic Response Station.

Is an 18-hour staffing schedule for the Mount Albert and Pepperlaw Stations a scheduling alternative?

Following the budget presentation, Health and EMS Committee members asked if the six full-time Paramedic positions that were requested to increase the Mount Albert Paramedic Response Station to 24 hour on-site staffing, could instead be scheduled to increase both the Mount Albert and the Pepperlaw Response Stations from 12 hour to 18 hour operations.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

EMS demand for service has increased by 9% from 2007 to 2008

EMS demand is complex; it is affected by multiple factors including patient age demographics, availability and timeliness of provincial health services (e.g. long-term care centres, hospitals, family physicians, health clinics, etc.) and population growth.

EMS must respond – it has neither the means nor the authority to reduce or restrict call demand. The goal of EMS in its deployment planning is to match supply (ambulances) against demand (transport and coverage) with a small amount of overlap to allow for reserve capacity.

The demand for EMS continues to grow. It is increasing at a faster pace than population growth, meaning the population is requiring more services despite population growth. The requested staffing increases in 2009 represent a 3% growth in staffing levels.

Staffing schedules have been developed to best match staffing levels with call demand

York Region EMS paramedics are scheduled on 12 hour shift rotations to ensure that staffing levels are at their highest during historical peak call demand periods.

York Region EMS maintains 19 Paramedic Response Stations strategically located throughout the Region. The Paramedic Response Stations in Mount Albert and Pepperlaw provide 12 hour per day ambulance coverage. A 12 hour per day Paramedic Response Unit is also staffed in Ballantrae. All other paramedic response stations in the Region are staffed 24 hours per day.

An 18 hour on-site staffing operation is feasible, but would require a more administratively complex schedule.

Converting the 12 hour per day station in Mount Albert to a 24 hour per day operation offers the greatest opportunity to respond to calls for service

In response to Committee's questions regarding the feasibility of staffing an 18 hour per day or a 24 hour per day response station, staff performed an analysis measuring the service benefits of a 24 hour operation in Mount Albert and a 12 hour operation in Pepperlaw versus an 18 hour operation in both stations.

The analysis concluded that 5% more calls would be serviced by the Mount Albert Station providing 24 hour coverage and leaving the Pepperlaw Station with a 12 hour operation. This is due to the call demand within the Mount Albert Paramedic Response Station coverage area being more than double that of the Pepperlaw Paramedic Response Station.

Six additional full- time Paramedics will service 36% more responses within the Pepperlaw Station response area

A 24 hour per day schedule at the Pepperlaw Response Station will allow that station to respond to additional calls that are currently serviced by other stations. This amounts to

36% more calls originating in the Pefferlaw response area being serviced by that station than the current staffing levels permit.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In December 2008, the Province announced an additional \$1.6 million to York Region EMS base funding. Because of the timing of this announcement, this increased funding could not be included in the Department's 2009 budget request.

At the Department's Budget presentation on January 8, 2009, staff identified this funding increase and proposed an additional six full-time Paramedic positions to increase service hours at the Pefferlaw Response Station from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day at a cost of \$658,000.

The remaining \$920,000 of the \$1.6 million in funding from the Province has been included in the 2009 Operating Budget report tabled at the February 5, 2009 Finance and Administration Committee, reducing the tax levy request for EMS.

The new provincial funding has a positive impact on tax levy and York Region's cost share

Table 1 demonstrates the impact of the increased funding options on York Region's tax levy and cost share.

The current proposed 2009 budget for EMS, without consideration for the new provincial funding, requests an increase of \$2.7 million or 12.8% tax levy increase with a Region cost share of 54.5%.

The application of \$920,000 in new provincial funding to reduce tax levy, and approval for an additional six full-time Paramedic positions, will reduce the EMS tax levy increase to \$1.8 million or 8.4% with a Region cost share of 52.4%.

The application of the total \$1.6 million in new provincial funding to reduce tax levy, could reduce the EMS tax levy increase to \$1.1 million or 5.3% with a Region cost share of 50.9%.

Table 1
Impact of New Funding on Tax Levy and Cost Share in 2009

	Current 2009 Proposed Budget	\$0.9 million Applied to Tax Levy and Six Additional Paramedics (recommended)	\$1.6 million Applied to Tax Levy
EMS Tax Levy Increase (\$)	\$2.7 million	\$1.8 million	\$1.1 million
EMS Tax Levy Increase (%)	12.8%	8.4%	5.3%
Region Cost Share	54.5%	52.4%	50.9%

The desired target for EMS funding is 50% with an equal share being funded by the Province. Since the service was transferred from the Province to the Region, costs increased with minimal provincial funding adjustments until the 2007 budget. The share of provincial funding has ranged from a low of 24.8% in 2006 to 44.4% in the 2008 budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Ambulance coverage for the Pefferlaw Paramedic Response Station in Georgina will increase from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day.

7. CONCLUSION

EMS demand for service increased by 9% from 2007 to 2008. The Department's 2009 Operating Budget submission requests six full-time Paramedic positions to increase on-site staffing at the Mount Albert Paramedic Response Station from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day.

This report recommends that an additional six full-time Paramedic positions be approved to increase on-site staffing at the Pefferlaw Paramedic Response Station from 12 hours per day to 24 hours per day, utilizing \$658,000 of an unanticipated \$1.6 million increase in provincial funding. The remaining \$920,000 in provincial funding has been included in the 2009 Operating Budget report tabled at the February 5, 2009 Finance and Administration Committee, reducing the tax levy request for EMS.

An analysis of an alternative 18 hour per day staffing schedule at the Mount Albert and Pefferlaw Paramedic Response Stations indicated that scheduling, although more administratively complex is feasible.

However, the analysis also concluded that a 24 hour per day operation at the Mount Albert Station and a 12 hour per day operation at the Pefferlaw Station would service 5% more calls.

The approval of six full-time Paramedic positions to make the Pefferlaw Paramedic Response Station a 24 hour per day operation will enable the capture of 36% more calls by that station that are currently serviced by other stations during non-staffed hours.

For more information on this report, please contact Norm Barrette, General Manager, Emergency Medical Services at Ext. 4044.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.