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EMS EFFICIENCIES REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT 2

(Regional Council at its meeting on June 22, 2006 amended the following Clause to include the additional recommendations:

- 2. The Region enter into a contract with Panasonic Inc. and its recommended representative, in respect of in-ambulance technology hardware and mounting supports for reasons of compatibility with the technical specifications required by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for its Locator Software, not to exceed \$367,000 pursuant to the sole source provisions of the Purchasing By-law.*
- 3. The Regional Chair and Regional Clerk be authorized to sign the necessary contract(s), subject to review by Legal Services.)*

The Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, June 1, 2006, from the Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve increased expenditures of up to \$367,000 in 2006 in support of the EMS Technology Plan, to be fully offset by increased provincial funding currently in Capital Reserves, with no increase to net expenditures.

2. PURPOSE

This report is the second of three reports that informs Committee and Council of the work done to date under the framework of the Commissioner's Service Review and Implementation Task Force.

This report seeks Council approval for an increase of up to \$367,000 in expenditures in 2006, fully offset by increased provincial funding, to implement the EMS Technology Plan, with no increase to net expenditures.

Finally, this report informs Committee and Council of the success of Niagara Region's pilot program to operate its own EMS dispatch service—Niagara Ambulance Communication Service (NACS).

3. BACKGROUND

In November 2005, Committee and Council received a presentation and report from J. Fitch & Associates entitled, "EMS Efficiencies Review." That report reviewed the current York Region EMS deployment model and made recommendations to improve its services.

In March 2006, the Commissioner established a Service Review and Implementation Task Force to address the recommendations arising from the J. Fitch & Associates report and to recommend and implement service delivery and business improvements and efficiencies.

This report reviews the progress to date in developing deployment plan options, and seeks approval from Committee and Council to implement plans and actions concerning business and service delivery efficiencies.

This report is the second of three anticipated progress reports. The final report will be submitted to Committee and Council in the fall of 2006.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Deployment Review Update

The principle objective of the Commissioner's Service Review and Implementation Task Force is to address the recommendations arising from the review conducted by J. Fitch & Associates, and to develop deployment options for Committee's consideration. The Commissioner and the Task Force has adopted an approach to engage staff through facilitated focus groups, to conduct this review as an open and transparent exercise, and to be realistic and practical in its recommendations.

To this end, staff were invited to provide their input through one of seven working group sessions held in mid-May. The Task Force facilitated working groups which were attended by over 60 paramedic, clerical and management staff. The groups focused on three service topics:

- Opportunities to improve the York Region deployment model
- Opportunities to improve response configurations
- Opportunities to improve training, development and retention

The groups have brought forward their recommendations to a working group of EMS managers. Members of this management working group and representatives from the focus groups will now review the groups' conclusions and recommendations, and will present options and recommendations to the Commissioner and General Manager.

The outcomes of these working groups, along with individual and group meetings that are being conducted by the Task Force's Project Director and Project Manager, and along with reviews of deployment models in other jurisdictions, will form the basis of the third report to Committee and Council in the fall of 2006 where deployment model options will be presented for Committee's consideration.

4.2 EMS Technology Plan

York Region EMS requires stable performance-based technologies to deliver real time communications for effective deployment. The Commissioner's Task Force has identified opportunities where it can expand and implement new technologies, and upgrade current systems to industry standards in order to improve its operations.

This report seeks approval from Committee and Council to increase expenditures by up to \$367,000 in 2006 to support this initiative. Future year funding, if required, will be addressed through the EMS Technology Plan and 2007 Business Plan and Budget process.

4.2.1 Mobile Locator

The Ministry of Health (MOH) Mobile Locator application is a unique combination of Geographic Information System (G.I.S.) software tools, which was developed by Emergency Health Services Branch (EHSB) Geographic Information System and relies on using accurate geographic data provided by the EHSB GIS Section. The system is installed in Note Books and mounted in ambulances. The integration of Global Positions System (G.P.S.) with MOH Mobile Locator permits the ambulance crew to see both a caller's location and the location of their ambulance on a laptop computer screen. The Locator Software, the Locator Mapping Data and training is offered by the MOHLTC GIS Section at no cost to the user. York Region GIS is also working closely with MOHLTC to integrate and download current mapping data to ministry software. In-vehicle computers are fast becoming an industry standard (see Table 1). EMS services across Ontario and Canada are moving to In-vehicle computers to provide instant call and navigation information.

Table 1
Status of Mobile Technology in 9 Ontario Jurisdictions

EMS	In-Vehicle Computer	Navigation Software
Niagara Region	√	√
Thunder Bay	√	√
Oxford County	√	√
Northumberland	√	√
Huron County	√	√
Durham Region	√	**
Waterloo Region	√	**
Toronto	√	√
Simcoe	**	**

** Currently in the process of installing systems/software.

York Region EMS has piloted this technology in six of its Paramedic Response Units and three of its supervisory vehicles. This system will provide responding paramedics with the ability to access the most up-to-date detailed map information in digital form in order to locate their destination and access the most expedient route. In order to receive the full benefits of mobile technology it is necessary to install the equipment/software in all EMS vehicles. Without this technology EMS crews will continue to use paper-based mapping.

The costs of fully implementing this technology in all York Region EMS vehicles are outlined on Table 2 in this report.

4.3 Hospital Board Presentations

As previously reported to members of Council hospital off-load delays remain outside of the direct control of York Region EMS. The Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services and the General Manager of York Region EMS met with the Board of the Southlake Regional Health Centre on May 11, 2006 to discuss these issues. The General Manager, EMS, made a presentation to the board highlighting the systemic operational and financial impacts of off-load delays. York Region EMS is requesting that the hospital boards support its position that senior hospital administration staff assume a leadership role in mitigating the impacts of off-load delays and identifying/implementing system-wide improvements. Presentations will be made to the remaining two hospital boards at a later date.

4.4 Niagara Region-Managed EMS Update

The Commissioner's Task Force met with Niagara EMS staff recently to discuss their Region-managed dispatch system. The following will provide a brief overview of Niagara Region's experience since acquiring dispatch.

On June 1 2005, Niagara Region assumed responsibility for the NACS, a region-managed dispatch operation. With the support of the MOHLTC, Niagara Region implemented several technologies and innovations that have demonstrated some initial improvements in call processing and ambulance response times.

Since operating NACS, Niagara Region has:

- Improved response time for the most critical, life-threatening calls
- Improved the ability to analyze data that is specific to local service areas and their needs
- Allowed staff to gain a better understanding of root causes for service level issues, particularly in rural areas

Niagara EMS staff have recently been honoured internationally, having their dispatch service accredited as a Centre of Excellence by the International Academy of Emergency Dispatch (IAED). IAED is the leading certifying and standard-setting organization in the world for emergency communications. Niagara Region's facility became only the third emergency dispatch service in Canada to be named a Centre of Excellence by IAED, and the first in Ontario.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is recommended that these costs in the amount of \$367,000 be funded through the additional \$5.1 million in provincial funding received in March 2006, which Council designated to the Capital Reserve. Staff has received recent correspondence from the MOHLTC indicating that it would be willing to take applications for 50% funding for the implementation of mobile locator technology. Staff will pursue this option and if successful will report back at a future date.

Table 2
Proposed Expenditures

	2006	2007	Ongoing
Mobile Technology			
Toughbook Laptop hardware	\$340,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Wireless Network and Data Charges	7,000	20,000	20,000
GIS support	20,000	10,000	0
Total Expenditures	\$367,000	\$30,000	\$20,000

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The benefits of these initiatives will be realized by municipalities through improved service delivery and a more efficient EMS service.

7. CONCLUSION

In November 2005, Committee received a presentation and report from J. Fitch & Associates entitled “EMS Efficiencies Review.” The Commissioner has responded to the J. Fitch & Associates Report with a close review of EMS services and supports, including the creation of a Service Review and Implementation Task Force to develop and recommend an EMS strategic operations plan and deployment model.

A third and final progress report will be submitted in the fall of 2006 and will include deployment model options for Committee and Council’s consideration.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.