

December 12, 2006

PROPOSED INTERFACILITY CRITICAL-CARE PATIENT TRANSFER SERVICE

The government has introduced proposed amendments to the *Ambulance Act* which, if passed, would facilitate the implementation of a new integrated air and land ambulance system to manage transfers of critically ill patients between health care facilities.

The proposed changes would allow for the central operation of the new system by Ornge, the not-for-profit organization which currently operates air ambulance services for the province.

The proposed new system would improve patient safety, provide faster transfers, cause less strain on hospital resources and reduce demands on local ambulance services. If established, the new system would operate with \$15 million in annual funding.

Under the new system, if established, Ornge would staff nine ambulances at eight locations across the province, one each in London, Kingston, Ottawa, Hamilton, Sudbury, Peterborough and Barrie, and two new vehicles in the Greater Toronto Area.

Interfacility Critical Care Patient Transfers

Interfacility critical care patient transfers are necessary for patients who are critically ill and need to be moved while under specialized care to another hospital to receive services or treatment.

Critical care transfer patients are similar in nature and need to the patients transported by dedicated critical care air ambulance. They require a more sophisticated and complex level of care than do most 911, on-scene emergency calls.

Currently, most of the critical care transfers between facilities involve having specialized staff (respirologists, doctors, critical care nurses, etc.) from the sending or receiving hospitals accompany the patient in municipal ambulances. This leaves fewer of these specialized front-line hospital workers where they are needed in the hospital and fewer municipal ambulances available to respond to emergency calls in their communities.

Critical Care Paramedics are authorized to perform very specialized controlled medical acts including the administration of specialized drugs and other intensive medical treatments that are often required during the transport of critically ill patients. Examples of these acts include, lab blood interpretation, monitoring arterial and central venous catheters, gastric intubation/suction, chest x-ray interpretation, management of chest tubes and chest drainage systems, and mechanical ventilation.

In Ontario today, only the City of Toronto and Ornge utilize Critical Care Paramedics.

Ornge

Ornge is the new brand name of the Ontario Air Ambulance Services Co (OAASC). Since January 2006, Ornge has operated Ontario's air ambulance program and is now responsible for:

- medical oversight of all air paramedics and all critical care paramedics;
- air ambulance dispatch (Ontario Air Ambulance Dispatch Centre);
- air and land ambulance transfer authorization via Provincial Transfer Authorization Centre (PTAC);
- organ recovery;
- critical care paramedic training/certification & continuing medical education.

Consolidating land-based critical care patient transfers under Ornge will provide Ontario with a fully integrated critical-care transfer system.

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