Public Health & Emergency Services
410 Buller Street
Woodstock Ontario N4S 4N2
Phone: 519-539-9800 • Fax: 519-537-1099
Web site: www.county.oxford.on.ca

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July 20, 2010

Mary Ellen Greb, CAO
Township of South-West Oxford
312915 Dereham Line
RR#1 Mount Elgin, ON
N0J 1N0

Re: Medical Tiered Response

Dear Mary Ellen Greb:

Please accept this correspondence in response to the resolution passed by the Township of South-West Oxford Council on July 6, 2010 regarding tiered response medical supplies.

During the 2010 budget deliberations Oxford County Council requested reductions to the Emergency Services budget. As a result of this direction all program areas in this budget were reviewed by staff to determine their appropriateness, effectiveness and identify opportunities for cost containment. The decision to transfer a portion of tiered response medical supply costs to the area municipalities is based on sound principles.

By way of history, the concept of tiered medical response in Ontario dates back to the late-1980's as a way of achieving the quickest possible response to victims of cardiac arrest by utilizing fire (and in some jurisdictions police services) to ensure the earliest opportunity for external cardiac defibrillation. There is considerable medical research to support a reduction in mortality for victims of cardiac arrest that are witnessed events with early CPR and the application of a defibrillator within six minutes. At present, this scenario continues to be the only patient classification where research and evidence based practice supports first responder reaction times as having an impact on patient mortality or morbidity.

The engagement and terms by which a municipal fire service in Oxford participates in a tiered medical response agreement is voluntary. Over the years some fire services in Oxford have requested revised tiered response agreements using different response criteria. These criteria range from not engaging in any medical response to municipalities that respond to all ambulance emergency calls regardless of the nature of the problem. Given this inconsistency there exists an inequity amongst all area municipalities with respect to the costs of supporting these agreements at the County level. Furthermore, costs associated with supporting tiered response programs are not eligible for inclusion in the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care 50/50 cost shared land ambulance funding grants.

As a result the decision was made to transfer certain costs to the fire services according to the following processes and rationale:

- Items used by the fire service on patients transported by Oxford County EMS can be replaced by on-scene paramedics at no cost. Thus, the EMS budget will absorb the

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costs for supplies used directly in the provision of patient care and be included in the grant funding formula.

- The costs of the defibrillation program inclusive of AED pads, training and recertification will continue to be supplied by Oxford County EMS at no charge to the fire services; except for the Medical Directors fee of $25.00/firefighter for delegation (this is unchanged from past practice). Oxford County EMS will seek to include the fire training officers in each department to assist with program delivery as a means of increasing the capability within each department and reducing ongoing training costs.

- Oxford County EMS has no control over the inventory of general medical supplies in the possession of each fire services. Thus, the costs associated with inventory control and lost or damaged equipment and supplies is better managed at the fire service level. Oxford County EMS will provide general medical supplies to fire services on a cost recovery basis.

In summary, we believe this change fairly apportions costs which are within the control of area municipal fire services according to their levels of tiered response engagement and internal practices. The new system allows for medical supply costs directly associated with patient care to be realized in the EMS budget and subject to grant funding. Furthermore, it recognizes the importance and continues to support the defibrillation program at a County level. The cost to residents in each area municipality will now be based on local need rather than a proportion of total costs at the County level.

Sincerely,

Lynn Beath
Director, Public Health and Emergency Services

cc

Michael Bragg
Joe Pember
Oxford County Area Municipality's