



Report To:	Program Planning Committee
From:	Robert Smith Chief of Paramedic Services
Date:	October 25, 2017
Re:	Ambulance Act Amendments - Issue Report

Background

Paramedic Services are one of the most heavily regulated professions. One of the main pieces of legislation impacting on Paramedic Services is the Ambulance Act. While this Act has gone through many small iterations over the last many years, [Bill 160 Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act](#) is an Omnibus Bill that includes some significant amendments to the Ambulance Act. The specifics of these changes will be addressed further in this document.

First and Second Reading of this Act are complete and the government is now preparing for public consultations. Third Reading is expected later this fall, and the information suggests that royal assent will take place prior to the next Provincial election in June of 2018.

History

Manitoulin Sudbury DSB Paramedic Service assumed responsibility for delivery of land ambulance services throughout the DSB in 2001 as part of the shifting of responsibilities between municipalities and the Province. In 2004, the DSB initiated direct delivery for EMS, now Paramedic Services.

Throughout its tenure in this role, the DSB has continued to work to address challenges specific to the needs of member municipalities surrounding Paramedic Services. In many instances, the challenges were resultant from legislative impairment, or regulatory roadblocks. The role of Paramedics in Ontario's health care system has been limited by strong legislation intended to focus the profession in a predetermined manner. Over the past few years, philosophies regarding Paramedic work have evolved. There has been the advent of Community Paramedicine, introduction of alternate destination trials, and increased involvement the holistic approach to health care.

Discussion

Bill 160, Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act is an Omnibus Bill that is intended to alter many aspects surrounding the patient's continuum through the health care system. While the Act sets out new regulation surrounding Long Term Care, Public health, and patient privacy, it also includes some significant amendments to the Ambulance Act.

The amended Ambulance Act will allow for some very specific actions to be undertaken. Firstly, the amendments will allow for introduction of treat and release opportunities. In short, this section will allow for Paramedics to consider leaving patients who do not require further care in their current location, it will allow paramedics to consider transporting patients to a more appropriate destination, thus avoiding overcrowding of the emergency department, it will allow for the government to implement programs to have fire services perform paramedic services, and it will increase the regulatory oversight for paramedics.

Benefits

The benefits from assent of Bill 160 will surround mostly capacity to explore alternate destinations for patients that may well reduce the deployment loss from long transport into an emergency department. One such example would be the introduction of programs where patients in Killarney, Noëlville, Foleyet and Gogama might be better served by transport to a medical clinic within the community, thus negating the Paramedic resource loss for many hours of unnecessary transport, while also allowing citizens to remain in their community where they can receive appropriate care while avoiding risks from institutional exposures in hospitals.

Risks

The risk to any new legislation surrounds the unknown aspects of that very document. Change is seen by many as a discouraging matter. There is risk of employee disengagement, but if managed correctly by senior staff, there is every confidence that such concerns can be mitigated. Obviously, there is a significant concern surrounding the concept of Fire Medic programs. These issues are being addressed through agencies such as Association of Municipalities Ontario and the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs. The outcomes of this concepts are less impactful for Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB, as there are no career fire services. Organizations such as the City of Greater Sudbury will have to navigate this issue.

Conclusion

Public consultation will be an opportunity for organizations such as AMO, NOSDA and DSSAB's to engage in the process, and to take the occasion to listen to what their own staff are saying about this change to legislation impacting on their profession.

It is likely that the legislation in some format will be moved into law by spring of 2018 in advance of the Provincial election. Continued information from the Chief's office will be shared to ensure the Board is fully aware of factors impacting on service delivery.