

June 4, 2007

INTERFACILITY CRITICAL-CARE PATIENT TRANSFER SERVICE

The *Health System Improvements Act, 2007* which achieved Royal Assent on June 4th, 2007, enacted an amendment to the *Ambulance Act* which facilitates the implementation of a new integrated air and land ambulance system to manage land transfers of critically ill patients between health care facilities.

Under the proposed new system, Ornge, the not-for-profit organization which currently operates air ambulance services for the province, will also provide nine dedicated critical care land ambulances at eight locations across the province, one each in London, Kingston, Ottawa, Hamilton, Sudbury, Peterborough and Barrie, and two additional vehicles in the Greater Toronto Area.

This system will improve patient safety, provide faster transfers for the most fragile patients, cause less strain on hospital resources and reduce demands on local ambulance services. The system will operate with \$15 million in annual funding.

Interfacility Critical Care Patient Transfers

Interfacility critical care patient transfers are necessary for patients who are critically ill or injured 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 land based 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 who staff these specialized air and land services 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 provides Ontario with a fully integrated critical-care transfer system.

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