



Corporate Report

DEPARTMENT/ DIVISION	City Manager's Office Emergency Medical Services	REPORT NO.	2002.363
DATE PREPARED	November 21, 2002	FILE NO.	
MEETING DATE	December 2, 2002		
SUBJECT	Response Time Improvement for District of Thunder Bay		

REPORT SUMMARY

To recommend that the City enter into a sign back agreement with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to access funding to improve Emergency Medical Response times in the City and District of Thunder Bay.

BACKGROUND

In September of 2001, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOH-LTC) requested submissions to address ambulance response times above the 1996 standard as stated in the Land Ambulance Certification Standard under the authority of the Ambulance Act Part II Section 3(1). This standard requires that service providers respond to priority four emergencies (life and death emergencies or unknowns) as quickly as was done in 1996, 90 percent of the time. For the District of Thunder Bay, the 1996 90th percentile response time was 12:43 and the 2001 response time is 14:17.

An action plan was submitted within the tight deadline requested by the province and steps were taken in the City of Thunder Bay budget process during the fall of 2001 to provide for the municipal portion of the funding. In mid-August of 2002, the City was asked to review the proposal and make changes to reflect new initiatives which could help reduce response times. The proposal was amended so that rural service coverage was increased from a minimum of 10 hours on site 7 days a week as was proposed in the original 2001 submission to 12 hours on site 7 days a week.

At the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario meeting held in August, provincial funding for this initiative was announced although individual municipalities were not aware of their portion.

On October 28, 2002, MOH-LTC provided a response to the submission. The total annual operating amount approved for Superior North EMS was \$1,150,000. Our request was for \$1,633,860. The MOH-LTC did not allow use of these funds to relocate or build new bases.

The addition of a daily 24 hour ambulance as well as a paramedic response unit (one paramedic responds in a special vehicle to closest calls or when ambulances are busy or not available and provides assistance until an ambulance can be freed) was supported.

The addition of hours in the rural and remote services to bring all services to the minimum of 10 hours on site per day seven days a week was supported in principle, but only a portion of the funding was allocated to achieve the desired results. The province advised that we could submit another proposal to better utilize the funding they had allocated. MOH-LTC also informed the municipality that the response time measurement is across the district, not within each individual services. The original proposal had been submitted on the basis of improving each individual service area.

COMMENTS

The MOH-LTC uses formulas to calculate the relationship between salaries and staffing hours which do not relate well to the true cost of service delivery. For example, they use an hourly rate based on 2% salary increases while we must pay actual salary costs. This practice is used throughout the process and at times works in favour of municipalities and at other times to the detriment. The latter is more common.

The agreements are simply an application process to obtain the full amount of allocated funding. They do not reflect or relate to the budget process except for the total amount being provided.

EMS believes that with the restructuring we are currently doing and the additional funding we have obtained in this process combined with cost reduction strategies, that we will be able to achieve the following;

1. Add one 24 hour ambulance in the City of Thunder Bay
2. Add one 24 hour Paramedic Response Unit in the City of Thunder Bay
3. Move remaining stations to a minimum of 10 hours on site across the district
4. Continue to pursue funding to relocate a station closer to north side call volume.

The documentation is based on the process used by MOH-LTC to calculate eligibility for the funding. Many stations are not included in this documentation because of the formula, but we fully expect to be able to cover all stations for 10 hours per day on site.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the proposed funding from the province can be used to help decrease response times across the District of Thunder Bay and in particular in the City of Thunder Bay. It is also a certainty that without the relocation of the stations in Thunder Bay, we will not achieve the 1996 90th percentile response time. The agreement to receive this funding requires that we make all reasonable efforts to decrease response time towards the target. The agreement does not required that we guarantee we will achieve the legislated response time.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2002.363 (Emergency Medical Services), we recommend that the City enter into a Sign Back Agreement with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care;

AND THAT the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the agreements outlined in this Report, including any supplementary agreements, and renewal agreements related to the Agreement in which no major changes to the current Agreements are proposed;

AND THAT the necessary by-law be presented to City Council for ratification.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

None.

PREPARED BY: Jocelyn Bourgoin, Director EMS

This report signed and verified by Robert Petrie, Acting City Manager, City of Thunder Bay on November 29, 2002