



# Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association

## **FACT SHEET**

### **Utilizing the fire service to save more Ontarians lives!**

#### **THE ISSUE:**

**November 2008**

Emergency Medical Systems in the province are at a crossroads. Ambulance funding has increased significantly and demands for more provincial and municipal funding grow louder, but service hasn't improved accordingly, as critical response time benchmarks continue to go unmet.

Rapid, efficient and effective delivery of emergency medical response is a critical element in patient survivability. Patient outcomes are dependant on the ability to immediately send trained personnel to the scene, regardless of the vehicle or mode of travel. After all, the focus must be on the patient.

With routine ambulance response times averaging over 12 minutes for life-threatening emergencies, standalone EMS providers are having a difficult time achieving provincial standards of just under 9 minutes. This has and continues to be clearly documented

#### **CURRENT STATUS:**

Millions of dollars have been poured into ambulance services over the past few years, yet it has not helped to significantly reduce ambulance response times. The 2005 Auditor General's Report stated that in Ontario, "two-thirds of land ambulance operators were not meeting their legislated response times, and the total cost of the program has increased by 94% over the last four years."

And despite nearly doubling the cost from 2002-2005, even more funding was added between 2005 and 2007 - and ambulance performance times still have not improved. We must look at other alternatives within our existing resources.

## **OPFFA's POSITION:**

The best way to reduce response times is to better utilize the existing resources of fire departments. Ontario's fire services have the ability to respond effectively and quickly to ALL HAZARDS; fires, motor vehicle accidents, Haz-Mat/CBRN incidents, terrorists attacks and yes, with existing medical skills, life threatening emergency medical calls.

The Fire Service is designed for rapid emergency response. By deploying firefighters as first responders, who are trained to administer CPR and defibrillation, the Ontario Fire Service can help their communities and the province of Ontario achieve higher survival rates and be part of the solution to solving existing problems with Ontario's current EMS system.

The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association believes that more Ontarians lives can be saved if the Government of Ontario does the following three things:

1. Mandate simultaneous dispatch of the community fire department and EMS for life threatening emergencies in communities served by full time professional fire fighters.
2. Recognize that trained firefighters can provide rapid medical assistance and should be included in all documentation when it comes to capturing response times. (Stopping the clock)
3. Involve the fire service in any stakeholder discussions with regards to emergency service responses to life threatening emergency medical calls.

**Copies of correspondence should be forwarded to:**

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