

The County of Peterborough

County Council

To: Warden and Members of Council

From: Bob English, Chief, Emergency Medical Services

Date: June 27, 2012.

Subject: Establishment of a permanent Air Ambulance based at Peterborough Airport by ORNGE

Recommendation:

Financial Impact: Nil

Background:

The transport medicine program evolved from a humble beginning in 1977 with a single helicopter based in Toronto. Over time many different regions of the province established their bases with paramedics practicing under regional base hospitals using either helicopters (rotor wing) or airplanes (fixed wing). The individual programs grew and expanded independently until 2005 when the MOHLTC created a single non-profit organization to coordinate all aspects of the aero-medical transport system and is accountable to the Ontario government through a performance agreement.

Originally known as the Ontario Air Ambulance Service Company it began operations in January 2006. In August of the same year the organization adopted a new name, ORNGE, to better reflect the full scope of the services it provides. ORNGE established air bases in London, Toronto, Ottawa and Sudbury to service Western, Central and Eastern Ontario. The air ambulance servicing this area transports patients who require high levels of critical care to hospitals such as The Hospital for Sick Children, St. Michael's Hospital and Sunnybrook Medical Centre.

From Peterborough, and locations north and east, time is of the essence. Improved response times by air are needed for these areas where land response times to critical care centres is excessive.

In 2008, ORNGE was designated by Bill 171, the Health Systems Improvement Act, to create an integrated land and air ambulance system for the transport of critically ill patients between hospitals. In addition to freeing up hospital resources within the communities, the implementation of an ORNGE land ambulance system is also expected to relieve pressure on EMS to allow them to focus more on 911 emergencies and responses, and to further increase the availability of air ambulances for outlying rural and remote areas. As most are aware, in November 2008, ORNGE established a Critical Care Transport Unit (CCTU) located in Peterborough that is currently staffed during the day 12 hours per day, seven days per week.

Analysis:

Attributes that would benefit ORNGE in establishing a permanent air ambulance based at Peterborough Airport and that will accommodate all three types of transport; rotor wing, fixed wing and critical care land ambulances are:

- Fire crash tender on site in addition to advanced training provided annually to EMS, airport staff and FIRE in emergency planning and crash site management;
- No restrictions on fly times as there is at other area airports that restrict arrival and departure times including specific directional flight paths;
- Lowest cost landing fees in a wide region of airports;
- Newly constructed 7000 foot runway to accommodate all types of aircraft;
- Twenty-four hour response for winter conditions and maintenance;
- Branded fuel supply for all aircraft (most corporations will not purchase unbranded fuel);
- Close proximity to City of Peterborough and major highway routes;
- Airport services by municipal sewer and water supply;
- Optimum property lease rates and available lands for expansion;
- Repair and maintenance facilities on site for all types of aircraft utilized previously by ORNGE;
- On-scene Environment Canada weather station for current updated weather information.

Attributes that would benefit Peterborough and surrounding areas are:

- Relieving deployment pressures on EMS allow them to focus more on 911 emergencies and responses;
- Reducing the need for PRHC and other nearby hospitals of providing critical care escort staff for critical care patient transfers to other centres when the ORNGE land ambulance is not available;
- Enabling ORNGE to increase availability for both air and land responses to outlying rural and remote areas of Peterborough County and especially surrounding areas that currently consider themselves “underserved” due to limitations of time criteria. Hastings County for example is geographically located between the Toronto and Ottawa based air ambulances and find it very problematic in receiving air responses in a timely fashion. It is an issue that affects the entire area, not just Peterborough.
- A permanently based air ambulance at Peterborough Airport will create new jobs for this area and be an asset to the economy.

In a survey of calls between January and July 2010, responses to the following locations had been serviced by the air ambulance located in Toronto:

Location	Number Of Calls	Response Time From Toronto
Peterborough	141	30:00
Cobourg	48	28:00
Barrie	46	26:00
Lindsay	44	25:00
Haliburton	33	45:00
Toronto	31	00:00
Oshawa	22	15:00
Kingston	21	65:00
Belleville	19	47:00
Minden	19	42:00
Campbellford	16	35:00
Bancroft	9	55:00
Barry's Bay	4	65:00
Trenton	3	35:00
Apsley	2	45:00
Tweed	1	48:00

Summary:

As indicated in the previous chart, to better serve the residents and visitors of Peterborough, the area receiving the largest number of calls across a vast region of Ontario, and to better enhance response times in the surrounding areas especially to the north and east, ORNGE needs to permanently locate an air ambulance based at Peterborough Airport.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert S. English, EMS Chief.