

Ground Ambulance Planning Guidelines

Transfer of Governance and Funding

Alberta Health & Wellness

June 22, 2004

Acknowledgements

Appreciation is extended to the many representatives from Alberta municipalities, health regions and government departments for their constructive and meaningful contributions during the initial ground ambulance realignment consultation processes.

The content of these Planning Guidelines is based on the input received from the representatives who participated in the consultation meetings held in April and May 2004. Alberta Health and Wellness thanks all participants for their creative input, significant contributions and ongoing support.

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1. Introduction

Ground ambulance services are an integral and highly valued part of the Alberta health care system. Ambulance service is the first point of contact with emergency health services for some critically ill patients. In addition, ground ambulance services provide essential inter-facility transportation for health care patients, residents and clients in the community and for all levels of care.

A review of ground ambulance services in Alberta was conducted by an MLA review committee led by Harvey Cenaiko MLA Calgary-Buffalo (Chair), and Luke Ouellette, MLA Innisfail-Sylvan Lake in 2001/2002. They recommended that governance and funding of ground ambulance service be transferred from municipalities to health regions.

Government considered the opportunities associated with the proposed change and made the decision to transfer the governance and funding of ground ambulance service from municipalities to health regions effective April 01, 2005.

There are many benefits and opportunities to transferring governance and funding to health regions. It is expected that the change will lead to improved coordination of health services throughout Alberta including the effective and efficient coordination of ground ambulance services, transportation, staffing, medical direction and protocols.

Once the transfer of responsibility is complete, municipalities will no longer be responsible for either governing or funding ground ambulance services. Municipalities will be able to reallocate funds they were spending to support ground ambulance to other municipal priorities.

Health regions will have the flexibility to choose service delivery models to fit their communities, including the option to contract out these services to current operators, be they municipal departments, integrated services or private companies, or to operate the services themselves.

Air ambulance services will not be a part of the ground ambulance change process. These services will continue to be the responsibility of Alberta Health and Wellness. However, although not part of this process, plans are underway to transfer responsibility for rotary-wing air ambulance to Capital Health and Calgary Health Region.

2. Summary of Initial Planning Activities

There is a strong commitment by government, health regions and municipalities to proceed with the changes in governance and funding. Activities to date include the following:

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| <p>Government Decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - March 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The decision to transfer governance and funding for ground ambulance from municipalities to health regions was announced in the 2004/05 Budget Speech. ▪ Appointed AHW Executive Sponsor and Lead Director for the project. |
| <p>Initial Consultation Meetings with Key Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 6, 2004 - April 27, 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two meetings were held with a cross section of representatives from municipalities, health regions and government. ▪ Information was provided on the decisions made to date by government, rationale for the decisions, the new governance model, goals, objectives, and timeframes. ▪ Input was received on a number of planning issues including: principles for the governance realignment, key opportunities and challenges, communication strategies, roles and responsibilities for AHW, health regions and municipalities, organization of the transition planning process and sources of information about the current ground ambulance system that will be essential during the planning process. |
| <p>AHW and health region meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May 11, 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHW met with health region representatives to review roles, responsibilities, expectations, planning timeframes, resources and access to information. |

3. Ground Ambulance Service Principles

- Ambulance service is health care.
- As part of a comprehensive province-wide health care system, health regions plan and ensure provision of ambulance service.
- Albertans have timely access to quality ambulance service.
- Ambulance service and patient transportation are well-coordinated and efficient province-wide.
- Health regions have the flexibility to determine service delivery models to fit their communities.
- Ambulances are dispatched by trained personnel who give advice to patients, family members or bystanders prior to the arrival of an ambulance.
- Funding responsibility is shared with users with a fair and equitable fee structure that protects lower income Albertans.
- Ambulance service is integral to community disaster planning and response.

4. Summary of Advantages and Opportunities

In the preliminary consultation meetings, participants identified benefits of proceeding with the change in governance and funding responsibility from municipalities to health regions for ground ambulance services in Alberta. In summary:

1. **Ground ambulance services are recognized as a valuable and essential part of the health care system**
 - Alignment of responsibility with health care resources.
 - Clarity of roles/responsibilities/accountabilities.
2. **Provincial standards and quality of care and service**
 - Ability to maintain or improve quality of care and service for ground ambulance.
 - Assure provincial standards for ground ambulance services and consistent policies across regions.
 - Ability to meet or exceed the expectations of AHW, health regions and municipalities.
 - A coordinated, province-wide, equitable ground ambulance funding structure.
3. **Improved efficiencies**
 - Potential for long term operating efficiencies through better coordination, integration of services, group purchasing.
 - Savings can be reinvested in other health care services.
 - Province-wide sustainability for the ground ambulance system.
4. **Financial savings for municipalities**
 - Municipalities will be relieved of funding responsibility for ambulance services, leaving funds for other local priorities.
5. **Improved coordination and integration of services**
 - Better coordination of patient transport and interfacility / interregional transfers.
 - Ability to better coordinate the ambulance dispatch systems.
 - Can consolidate medical directors and protocols across the region.
6. **Improved opportunities for EMS staff**
 - EMS staff down time can be coordinated with the need for surge support within the health care system.
 - Paramedic skills will be better used.
 - Opportunity to keep skills up through exposure to a broader cross section of practice.
7. **Customize ambulance services to meet individual regional needs**

5. Principles to Guide the 2004/2005 Planning and Transition Process

The following principles were developed to guide the planning and transition process:

Transfer of governance of ground ambulance services will be planned in a manner that:

1. Ensures continued AHW responsibility and accountability for setting broad provincial policy, expectations and direction for the delivery of ground ambulance services;
2. Recognizes and respects the operational planning, service delivery and reporting roles and accountabilities of the health regions;
3. Recognizes and respects the high quality of service and the commitment to excellence demonstrated by municipalities over the past years in their operation, governance and stewardship of ground ambulance services in Alberta; and
4. Recognizes and respects the contributions, excellent service and expertise of current providers of ground ambulance services.

Parameters and Basic Assumptions

- Responsibility for governance of ground ambulance service will be transferred from municipalities to the health regions on April 01, 2005.
- The policy and accountability requirements of the provincial government and the health regions will be met.
- After transfer of responsibility has occurred, AHW, through the health regions, will accept responsibility for funding ground ambulance services. Municipalities will not be responsible for funding ground ambulance services.
- Responsible stewardship of taxpayers' dollars will continue through the effective governance of ground ambulance services by the health regions.
- The transition of responsibilities, accountabilities and ground ambulance services will be seamless and transparent to the patients served.
- All planning, transition and service issues will be resolved where possible at the local level. AHW will facilitate a resolution process for issues that cannot be amicably resolved between the health regions and the municipalities.

Operating Principles

- Patient care service, quality and access to ground ambulance services will not be compromised.
- Providing patients with timely access to the right level of safe, high quality care will be the fundamental consideration in all ground ambulance services provided by and through health regions.
- AHW will continue to maintain existing provincial standards for ground ambulance services.
- AHW, health regions and municipalities will place high priority on building strong productive working relationships characterized by teamwork, mutual respect, transparency and trust.
- Operational information required to support effective planning and decision-making will be shared openly among the relevant organizations.

- All stakeholders will conduct their operations in a manner that will maximize the success of both current and future providers of ground ambulance services. Business will be conducted in good faith by all parties.
- Municipalities and current providers will not do anything that will jeopardize the success of health regions and/or future providers. Municipalities will continue regular maintenance, maintain long-term commitments, and otherwise follow good business practice and continue operations in a normal manner.
- No parties will compromise the other. Required purchase of replacement capital and operating assets will continue in 2004/05 as though there was no pending change in governance. Contract management and human resource issues will be dealt with in an effective and timely manner.
- Health regions and municipalities will be open to innovative approaches with the potential to maintain and improve service quality and operational effectiveness.
- Health regions and municipalities will focus their energy and resources on achieving a shared vision and a common strategic direction.
- AHW, health regions and municipalities will communicate in an open and timely fashion and deliver clear and consistent messages to internal and external audiences.
- There will be an agreement within each health region and with each municipality about how assets and liabilities will be accounted for and dealt with. Each agreement will be consistent with provincial direction and guidelines.

Scope of Services

- Services will be delivered in accordance with legislation and provincial policies.
- All significant changes to the scope of ground ambulance services must be agreed to in advance by AHW, the health region and the municipality during the planning and transition period.
- A philosophy of flexibility in models of service delivery will be supported by AHW, health regions and municipalities in order to meet the needs of different communities and different regions.

Transition Planning

- A Provincial Ground Ambulance Transition Advisory Committee will be established and will make recommendations to AHW regarding provincial policy and general oversight of the provincial planning process.
- Relevant working groups will be established to undertake detailed work and to recommend service delivery approaches.
- Health regions will establish and support an appropriate planning committee structure and planning process.
- There will be a high priority placed on the fair and reasonable treatment of ground ambulance human resources, operators, and contractors.
- Health regions and municipalities will mutually agree on a transition date. However, it is expected that the transfer of governance responsibility to all health regions is expected to be completed on or about April 01, 2005.

Funding Flow

- AHW will flow funding to health regions to support the government's portion of the cost for ground ambulance services.
- Base funding provided by AHW for ground ambulance services to the health regions will be dedicated to this service for a minimum of three years.
- Health regions will flow the funds provided by AHW to ground ambulance service provision, based upon the terms and conditions of negotiated service agreements.

Accountability

- AHW will maintain overall accountability for setting provincial policy.
- Health regions, directly or through inter-regional structures and/or contracted service providers, will be responsible for assuring the delivery of ground ambulance services in a manner that will meet AHW policies and expectations.

6. Policy Expectations for the Ground Ambulance Planning Process

The following provincial planning policies have been developed to assure that all stakeholders proceed with their planning responsibilities with recognition of the need for a province-wide perspective. During planning it is important to recognize and demonstrate appreciation for the valuable contributions made to date by Alberta municipalities and existing ground ambulance operators.

Provincial Planning Approach

- A Provincial Ground Ambulance Transition Advisory Committee will be established and will make recommendations to AHW regarding provincial policy and general oversight of the provincial planning process.
- Relevant working groups may be established by the Advisory Committee or by AHW.

Health Region Planning Approach

- Within AHW policies and transition principles, health regions will organize their individual planning processes and structures in any manner they choose. Health region planning structures should reflect the unique needs, culture, priorities and services of the health region, and do not have to be the same in each region.
- Health regions will work closely with municipalities and ambulance operators throughout the planning, transition and implementation of the governance change process.
- Health regions will be held accountable for achieving the objectives set out by AHW within the scope, financial resources and timelines established for the transition of governance responsibility.
- Health regions will be inclusive in their planning processes and will ensure that an effective and timely communication plan is implemented so that key stakeholders in their region are well informed of the planning process and stage of activity.

7. Ground Ambulance Services Planning Roles and Responsibilities

Alberta Health and Wellness, health regions, Alberta Municipal Affairs and municipalities will all continue to play important roles in the planning and transition of the change in governance and funding for ground ambulance services in Alberta.

Alberta Health and Wellness

AHW is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Government of Alberta decision to change the governance of ground ambulance services from municipalities to health regions on April 01, 2005. AHW will lead the planning process at the provincial level and will set provincial policy, provincial expectations and standards and coordinate the provincial planning processes.

More specifically, AHW is responsible for:

1. Organizing and overseeing a planning process that will assure a seamless transfer of governance responsibility from the municipalities to the health regions on April 01, 2005.
2. Designing and implementing an effective provincial communication plan to assure stakeholders are aware of the planning processes and pending change on April 01, 2005.
3. Leading the definition of roles, responsibilities and authorities of all key stakeholders.
4. Delegating the authority to health regions for the planning, transition and implementation processes within each health region.
5. Distributing provincial planning and transition funds for the change process to each health region based on their individual needs.
6. Monitoring and overseeing the planning, transition and implementation of the governance change in each health region.
7. Drafting, defining, interpreting and communicating government policy related to the operation of ground ambulance services in Alberta.
8. Defining, monitoring and communicating government expectations.
9. Establishing provincial planning priorities and timelines.
10. Holding health regions accountable for their planning responsibilities.
11. Supporting the health region planning processes through providing access to provincial ground ambulance operating information, and historical statistics.
12. Working with the health regions to analyze and project the cost of operating ground ambulance services in each health region. Set the amount of operating budgets each health region will receive in 2005/2006.
13. Establishing a Provincial Ground Ambulance Transition Advisory Committee to advise AHW on planning, transition and implementation challenges and opportunities.
14. Facilitating legislative and regulatory changes needed to support this transfer of responsibility.

Health Regions

Within AHW policies and expectations, health regions are responsible for planning, organizing, directing and implementing an effective and efficient planning and implementation process that will facilitate the acceptance of governance responsibility for ground ambulance services within their geographic areas on April 01, 2005. Health regions have the authority to establish their own unique planning structures as long as AHW policies and expectations are met.

More specifically, each health region is responsible for:

1. Assuming responsibility, accountability and authority for leading the planning, transition and implementation processes at the regional level and within the geographic area of the region.
2. Working within AHW policies and expectations.
3. Learning about ground ambulance services and systems so that regional plans may be developed.
4. Working with the Transition Advisory Committee and AHW to assure that the planning organization and processes in each health region are coordinated with the activities of other health region planning processes.
5. Appointing an administrative and a medical lead to assume responsibility for the planning process within each region.
6. Developing, establishing and supporting an appropriate planning committee structure and planning process.
7. Allocating appropriate administrative, medical, technical and planning resources to the initiative to assure that is successful.
8. Working closely with municipalities, ambulance operators and contractors throughout the planning and transition processes to assure they have appropriate opportunities to provide input and advice to the health region.
9. Designing and implementing an effective regional communication plan to assure all stakeholders are aware of the progressive steps throughout the planning process.
10. Sharing planning information, successes and the strategies that did not work, with AHW and the other health regions.
11. Working with the key stakeholders within the region, develop detailed governance, operating and financial plans for 2005/2006 and forward.
12. Developing a longer-term plan for ground ambulance services that is integrated into their emergency health service plan for the region.
13. Other expectations as may be defined by AHW.

Alberta Municipal Affairs

Alberta Municipal Affairs is responsible for supporting the implementation of the Government of Alberta decision to transfer the governance of ground ambulance services from municipalities to health regions on April 01, 2005. Alberta Municipal Affairs will work with Alberta Health and Wellness at the provincial level to address provincial-level policy issues.

More specifically, Alberta Municipal Affairs is responsible for:

1. Supporting Alberta Health and Wellness in the planning, transition and implementation processes at the provincial level.
2. Facilitating legislative and regulatory changes needed to support this transfer of responsibility.

Municipalities

Within AHW policies and expectations, municipalities are responsible for the governance, funding, and operation of ground ambulance services under the current agreements and accountabilities up to the transfer of responsibilities expected to be on or about April 01, 2005.

More specifically, each municipality is responsible for:

1. Continuing to govern, fund and operate ground ambulance services within their current authorities and jurisdictions.
2. Continuing to provide quality ground ambulance services to the patients in their response area throughout the planning and transition periods.
3. Openly and voluntarily sharing information about all aspects of the ground ambulance services in their areas with the health regions who will be assuming governance responsibility for these services.
4. Continuing to meet existing commitments to ground ambulance services, up to the time of transition to their health region, expected to be April 01, 2005, for quality of services, data collection, reporting, financial, administrative, medical support; staff compensation; contract management; training; capital equipment; maintenance; in the same manner as they would have been met if there was no pending change in governance.
5. As requested, participating with the health regions and AHW in the planning, transition and implementation processes for the change in governance of the ground ambulance services.
6. Based on the information received from the health regions and AHW, initiating communication about the planning and transition processes.
7. Working closely with the health regions to assure that the health regions understand the current ground ambulance vision, operating model, strategic direction, contracts, current and pending challenges and opportunities, operating costs, and any other information that will be of assistance to the health region in their new role on April 01, 2005.

9. Next Steps - Summary of Future Planning

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| <p>Preliminary Plans and Transition Funding</p> <p>June 15, 2004 - July 31, 2004</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHW will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ provide feedback to key stakeholders on results of consultation meetings ○ distribute provincial planning guidelines ○ allocate planning and transition funding for 2004/05 ○ appoint Provincial Transition Advisory Committee ▪ Health regions will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ submit preliminary proposals for regional planning ○ submit request for transition funds ○ initiate regional planning processes ○ assume lead responsibilities for working with key stakeholders within their regions, including municipalities and ambulance operators ▪ Municipalities will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continue to support quality services ○ participate with health regions in planning and sharing information and expertise |
| <p>Implementation Planning</p> <p>August 01, 2004 – September 30, 2004</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHW will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continue to set provincial policy, expectations ○ oversee the planning and transition process ○ review and provide feedback on health region transition and implementation plans ▪ Health regions will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continue to work with key stakeholders ○ submit a transition and implementation plan ▪ Municipalities will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continue to meet existing commitments to ground ambulance services ○ continue to openly share relevant information, expertise and advice |
| <p>Prepare for Implementation</p> <p>October 1, 2004 – March 31, 2004</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHW, health regions and municipalities prepare for implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ monitor plans ○ resolve arising issues ○ communicate effectively |
| <p>Implementation</p> <p>April 1, 2005</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governance and funding of ground ambulance services is transferred to health regions and supported by key stakeholders ▪ Effective communication continues |

10. Governance & Funding Transition Key Contacts

1. Chinook Health Region

- Diane Shanks, Director, Emergency Services
 - 403-388-6194 dshanks@chr.ab.ca

2. Palliser Health Region

- Howard Snodgrass, EMS Transition Leader
 - 403-529-8009 hsnodgrass@palliserhealth.ca

3. Calgary Health Region

- Debbie Goulard, Manager Transition Services
 - 403-944-8156 debbie.goulard@calgaryhealthregion.ca

4. David Thompson Health Region

- Dave Kehoe, Director, Materials Management
 - 403-343-4568 dkehoe@dthr.ab.ca

5. East Central Health

- Brian Stevenson, Chief Corporate Service Officer
 - 780-608-8810 brian.stevenson@eastcentralhealth.com

6. Capital Health

- Donna Towers, Chief Liaison Officer
 - 780-407-6861 dtowers@cha.ab.ca

7. Aspen Health Region

- Cliff Cottingham, VP, Health Services West
 - 780-967-6844 ext. 255 ccotting@aspenrha.ab.ca

8. Peace Country Health

- Don Hunt, Team Lead, Ambulance Transition
 - 780-933-0407 (cell) Don.Hunt@pchr.ca

9. Northern Lights Health Region

- Valetta Lawrence, VP, Health Services
 - 780-791-6207 vlawrence@nlhr.ca

Alberta Health and Wellness

- Janet Skinner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Program Services
 - 780-415-1599 janet.skinner@gov.ab.ca
- Pearl Morrison, Director, Emergency Health Services
 - 780-422-9678 pearl.morrison@gov.ab.ca
- Marty Scott, Manager, Ground Ambulance
 - 780-422-9632 marty.scott@gov.ab.ca

March 31, 2004

Transfer of Ground Ambulance Governance and Funding from Municipalities to Health Regions

Over the next two years, Alberta Health and Wellness will work with health regions to move responsibility for ground ambulance service from the municipalities to the regions. Health regions will in turn work closely with their constituent municipalities while developing plans for implementation.

In the 2004/2005 budget, \$13 million was allocated to work with current operators and health regions to develop a new funding model to transfer responsibility from municipalities to the province. This transfer will improve coordination of services particularly in rural areas.

Municipalities presently providing ambulance services, including those with integrated ambulance and fire service, will have the opportunity to continue to operate under contractual relationships with health authorities.

Moving Forward:

Step 1: Beginning on April 6, 2004 Alberta Health and Wellness will lead workshops in which municipal and health region representatives will work together to identify challenges and opportunities involved in the transfer. Participants will also validate the core principles of ground ambulance service, necessary in maintaining appropriate service. At a second workshop, participants will develop strategies to address the priorities and challenges. Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties have named representatives to attend these workshops.

Step 2: Based on input provided at the workshops, Alberta Health and Wellness will develop guidelines for the transfer. These guidelines will support health regions as they work with municipalities to develop plans and prepare for the transfer of ground ambulance service. Alberta Health and Wellness will work with the regions and municipal associations to provide feedback on the workshops. Interested parties with questions or comments can contact their municipal associations or Alberta Health and Wellness.

Step 3: Health regions will work closely with municipalities to address common opportunities and issues in delivering ambulance services to Albertans.

Implementation is expected in 2005/2006 at which time funding will increase to \$55 million annually. Health regions will have responsibility for governance and funding of ground ambulance services, ensuring they are planned and accounted for within the health system.

Once the transition is complete, municipalities can reallocate ambulance funding to other priorities.

Statistics:

- Each year, more than 210,000 Albertans receive care from ambulance operators, including 60,000 seniors and 70,000 patients transferred between health facilities.
- 450 ambulances and 5000 EMS practitioners operate in Alberta.

For more information, please contact:

David Dear
Assistant Director, Media Relations
Alberta Health and Wellness
(780) 427-7164

May 14, 2004

Transfer of Ground Ambulance Governance and Funding from Municipalities to Health Regions

Government has identified ground ambulance service as a health service, allocating \$13 million in the 2004/2005 budget to work toward transferring responsibility from municipalities to health regions. This transfer will improve co-ordination of services, particularly in rural areas.

Health authorities, in consultation with municipalities, will determine which communities require the new provincial standard of Basic Life Support (BLS), or Advanced Life Support (ALS). When each region has determined their ambulance service plan, they will submit a funding request to Alberta Health and Wellness as part of their overall business planning activities.

Global budget allocations to each health authority will include a line item for ambulance service delivery, and will be announced as part of the provincial budget in 2005. On April 1, 2005, municipalities are free to reallocate funding previously directed to ambulance services to other priorities.

Progress to date:

Since the March information update, Alberta Health and Wellness hosted two stakeholder meetings on April 6 and 27 to plan for the transfer of ground ambulance services. Representatives included: municipalities named by the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (including the cities of Edmonton and Calgary), health regions and provincial officials.

All stakeholders agree the primary goal is a seamless transition of governance for ground ambulance services, and a continued commitment to quality patient care. A number of opportunities were identified in transferring governance and funding; for example, improved co-ordination of ambulance service with other health services, and financial savings for municipalities. Those municipalities presently providing ambulance services, including those with integrated ambulance and fire services, will have opportunities to continue operating under contract with health authorities.

A further discussion with health region representatives was held May 11 to review roles, expectations and responsibilities during the service transfer. Feedback from the April 27 meeting was provided, with health regions committing to work closely with municipalities in addressing common opportunities and issues in delivering ambulance services to Albertans. A general framework for both provincial and regional planning structures was discussed, with the understanding health authorities may establish any structure necessary that meets the needs of the communities in their region.

Moving Forward:

Step 1: Throughout May and June, health regions will communicate and work closely with municipalities to plan their transition process within the guidelines set out by Alberta Health and Wellness.

Step 2: In June Alberta Health and Wellness will finalize the guidelines for planning the governance transfer based on feedback from the April and May meetings, and distribution of the 2004/2005 planning funds. A provincial transition plan for moving ambulance services from municipalities to health authorities will also be finalized. A final progress update to the key stakeholder group, which met twice in April, will

be held in late summer or early fall.

Step 3: In the fall, health authorities will continue to work with municipalities and ground ambulance service providers to develop detailed transition plans.

Implementation is expected in 2005/2006, when funding will increase to \$55 million annually. Health regions will have responsibility for governance and funding of ground ambulance services, ensuring they are planned and accounted for within the health system.

Once the transition is complete, municipalities can reallocate ambulance funding to other priorities.

Statistics:

- Each year, more than 210,000 Albertans receive care from ambulance operators, including 60,000 seniors and 70,000 patients transferred between health facilities.
- 450 ambulances and 5000 EMS practitioners operate in Alberta.

For more information, please contact:

David Dear
Assistant Director, Media Relations
Alberta Health and Wellness
(780) 427-7164

May 28, 2004

Clarification of the Transfer of Ground Ambulance Governance and Funding from Municipalities to Health Regions

Last week the government released details about the transfer of ground ambulance service from the municipalities to health regions, generating some questions regarding additional funds from municipalities to cover costs.

On April 1, 2005, municipalities will no longer fund ground ambulance services and will be able to allocate funds currently dedicated to this service to other municipal priorities. Ground ambulance service has been identified as a health service and will be funded through the health regions.

Health regions have committed to work closely with municipalities during the planning phase to address common opportunities and issues in delivering ambulance services to Albertans. Before the transfer is finalized, health regions will consult with municipalities and ambulance operators to determine what funding resources are required to maintain present levels of service during the transition. When each region has determined their ambulance service plan, they will submit a funding request to Alberta Health and Wellness as part of their overall business planning activities.

Those municipalities presently providing ambulance services, including those with integrated ambulance and fire services, will have opportunities to continue operating under contract with health authorities.

The Government of Alberta has allocated \$13 million in the 2004/2005 budget to work toward the transfer. In April 2005, health regions will be responsible for governance and funding for ground ambulance service. Funding will then rise to \$55 million annually.

Alberta Health and Wellness has already hosted stakeholder meetings as part of the planning process for the transfer. In June, the Ministry will provide health regions with finalized guidelines for the governance transfer based on feedback from these meetings. Health regions will continue to work with municipalities into the fall to develop detailed transition plans. The primary goal is to ensure a seamless transition of governance for ground ambulance services, and a continued commitment to quality patient care.

For more information, please contact:

Candace Toews
Communications
Alberta Health and Wellness
(780) 427-7164

Key Messages - Ground Ambulance Service Transfer April 6, 2004

- Participants of the Ground Ambulance Realignment Workshop met April 6, 2004 for the first of two planning meetings.
- This was the beginning of a year-long process in defining and transferring governance of Alberta's ground ambulance services from municipalities to regional health authorities (RHAs).
- Organizations represented included municipalities named by the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, as well as representatives from RHAs, Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Municipal Affairs, and Alberta Human Resources and Employment.
- Participants received an update on the current ambulance system, and discussed principles that will guide the transfer of services.
- Discussions took place regarding opportunities, challenges and priorities related to the transfer of governance and funding responsibility.
- Participants left the table feeling optimistic that challenges and opportunities were heard and understood.
- Ultimately, this work is about achieving a positive, seamless transition for patients.
- There is agreement that development of service delivery models will be the responsibility of RHAs working in partnership with municipalities.
- After consolidating feedback from the meeting, next steps will be discussed at another meeting in the weeks to come.
- All media inquiries should be directed to David Dear, Assistant Director of Media Relations, Alberta Health and Wellness, at 427-7164, or toll-free at 310-0000.

Key Messages - Ground Ambulance Service Transfer April 27, 2004

- Representatives of key stakeholder groups attended the second of two meetings on April 27th to discuss the transfer of ground ambulance service governance.
- Representatives included:
 - municipalities named by the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - regional health authorities
 - Alberta Health and Wellness
 - Alberta Human Resources and Employment
 - Alberta Municipal Affairs
- All agreed the primary goal is to ensure a seamless transition of governance for ground ambulance services.
- AHW is leading the planning process at the provincial level and RHAs will lead transition planning at the local level.
- Participants reiterated the critical role of timely, effective communications during this planning process.
- A number of opportunities were identified in transferring governance and funding of ground ambulance service from municipalities to regional health authorities (RHAs); for example, improved co-ordination of this health service with other health services, and financial savings for municipalities.
- Based on guiding principles developed earlier, discussions centered on providing input and advice in addressing each of four primary challenges: communication, roles and responsibilities, maintaining service excellence during the planning and transition process, and ensuring a clear understanding among stakeholders of how the current ground ambulance system works.
- These understandings will serve as a foundation for defining the next steps in the process.
- Next steps:
 - In May: AHW will meet with RHAs to review roles, expectations and responsibilities; and feedback from April's workshops will be provided to key stakeholders.
 - In June: AHW will finalize guidelines for planning the governance transfer and for distributing the 2004/2005 planning funds; a provincial transition plan will be developed.
 - Late summer/early fall: Another meeting of the key stakeholder group will be held.
 - By fall: RHAs will be meeting with ground ambulance providers to develop detailed transition plans.
- Please direct media inquires to David Dear, Assistant Director of Media Relations, Alberta Health and Wellness, at 427-7164, or toll-free at 310-0000.

Ground Ambulance Realignment Workshop Participants – April 6 & 27, 2004

Health Region Representatives

- Vern Jubber, Vice President, Chinook Regional Health Authority
- Tom Seaman, President & CEO, Palliser Health Region
- Janet Umphrey, Vice President, NW Community Portfolio, Calgary Health Region
- Dave Kehoe, Director, Materiel Management, David Thompson RHA
- Brian Stevenson, Chief Corporate Service Officer, East Central Health
- Donna Towers, Chief Liaison Officer, Capital Health
- Cliff Cottingham, VP, Health Service West, Aspen RHA
- Shawn Terlson, Chief Financial & Information Officer, Peace Country Health (April 6)
- Dalton Russel, CEO Peace Country Health Region (April 27)
- Valetta Lawrence, VP, Health Services, Northern Lights Health Region
- Mike Higgins, Executive Director, Provincial Health Authorities Association

Municipal Representatives

- Ed Marchak, Senior Director, Strategy & Policy Development, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (April 6)
- John McGowan, Chief Executive Officer, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (April 27)
- Deryl Kloster, General Manager, Emergency Response Department, City of Edmonton
- Erika Hargesheimer, General Manager, Community Services and Protective Services, City of Calgary
- Dave Gourlay, City Manager, City of Grande Prairie
- Allan Harvey, CAO, City of Bonnyville
- Loretta Thompson, CAO, MD Pincher Creek
- Ric Henderson, Protective Services Director, Red Deer County (April 6)
- Gordon Frank, CAO, MD Greenview
- Pat James, Director, Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties (April 6)
- Phyllis Kobasiuk, Director, Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties Board (April 27)

Government Members

- Harvey Cenaiko, MLA, Calgary Buffalo, Chair Ambulance Advisory and Appeal Board
- Luke Ouellette, MLA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Alberta Health and Wellness

- Janet Skinner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Program Services
 - Pearl Morrison, Director, Emergency Health Services
 - Marty Scott, Manager, Ground Ambulance
 - Hal Canham, EMS Medical Director
- Wayne McKendrick, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Authorities
 - Ron Benson, Consultant, Health Authorities
- Bruce Perry, Assistant Deputy Minister, Finance & Corporate Services
 - Joan Neatby, Barrister & Solicitor, Legal & Legislative Services
- Candace Toews, Public Affairs Officer, Communications

Alberta Municipal Affairs

- Paul Leeder, Director, Issues Management, Office of the Deputy Minister
- Gary Sandberg, Director, Stakeholder Relations, Local Government Services

Alberta Human Resources & Employment

- Dave Thompson, Labour Relations Specialist, Workplace Policy & Standards

