



City of Sarnia

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: January 15, 2021 RELEASE DATE: Immediate
FROM: Bryan VanGaver, Fire Chief
SUBJECT: Sarnia Fire Rescue Services and Lambton County Emergency
Medical Services Tiered Response Agreement

In 2014 the City of Sarnia, Sarnia Fire Rescue Services (SFRS) entered into a mutually agreed-upon arrangement with the County of Lambton, Lambton County Emergency Medical Services (LCEMS). This agreement superseded an earlier arrangement between the parties dating back to 2006. The 2014 Tiered Response Agreement outlines the criteria to dispatch SFRS, providing an early response to emergency medical calls.

LCEMS proposed a new, county-wide Tiered Response Agreement in 2017. SFRS declined these proposed changes, stating they will continue to operate under the terms of the existing 2014 agreement, an agreement providing the citizens of Sarnia with the highest service levels.

However, in March 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic during a time of uncertainty, the former SFRS Fire Chief temporarily amended the criteria activating SFRS for a tiered response. Ten months later, SFRS is in a much better position regarding COVID-19 with respect to knowledge, safety, and procedures, including the availability and use of personal protection equipment, and I am confident that SFRS can once again resume the more extensive criteria for response as set out in the 2014 Tiered Response Agreement.

The Sarnia Professional Firefighters Association's (SPFFA) President, Matt Madere, expressed his full support of the Fire Chiefs and the City of Sarnia, stating, "Tiered response has been an integral part of our service for 25+ years and is the norm throughout the province of Ontario. When you or your family have a medical emergency, response time matters. With five strategically placed stations in the core of Sarnia, our response time is minutes. The residents of our City deserve and expect the intrinsic service that Sarnia Fire Rescue has provided for nearly three decades; we welcome Council's direction to return to normal protection of medical response within the City of Sarnia."

Unfortunately, when SFRS notified their LCEMS partner of their intention to resume the terms of the 2014 agreement, the response was negative. LCEMS refuses to direct the Wallaceburg Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) to tier SFRS on all the response types listed in the 2014 agreement.

Public safety is of paramount concern and value to the citizens of our City. During a life-threatening emergency, time may be a crucial factor in determining the outcome and survivability. It is also impossible to fully assess the nature of an incident before you are on the scene. Therefore, it remains highly beneficial to our citizens to continue the practice of the tiered level of support and to reinstate the more extensive list of criteria in the 2014 Tiered Response Agreement, which is a determination made by City Council.

- 30 -

For further information, please contact:

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