



**Health and Wellness
Office of the Minister**

PO Box 488, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2R8 • Telephone 902-424-5818 Fax 902-424-0559 • Health.Minister@novascotia.ca

August 22, 2023

Penny Smith, Warden
Municipality of the District of Shelburne
warden@municipalityofshelburne.ca

Dear Warden Smith:

Thank you for your letter dated July 28, 2023, regarding the current state of Nova Scotia's healthcare system and the prolonged ambulance response times within Shelburne County.

You had specific questions regarding significant investments made to improve Emergency Health Services (EHS) and if such improvements had been implemented as well as the measured successes. I am pleased to share the following key changes have been made in the EHS system:

Patient Transport Units (PTUs)

PTUs use a combination of one paramedic and one Clinical Transport Operator (CTO) instead of two paramedics. It is used for non-urgent or non-critical transfers of patients, which makes up about 65% of EHS transfers. We have increased the number of units in 2022 to 21.

Medical Transport Services (MTS)

MTS was introduced in 2021 and is used for non-emergency routine transfers at no cost to the patient. CTOs are utilized instead of paramedics and, in combination with PTUs, have significantly reduced the number of transfers being completed by emergency ambulances from approximately 80% to 20%.

Clinical Transport Operators (CTOs)

CTOs were implemented in 2021 for the purpose of staffing the MTS vans. There are currently 138 CTOs working across Nova Scotia.

Recognition/Retention Incentive Bonus

The \$5,000 bonus, announced in March 2023, was paid out to eligible healthcare workers including paramedics and communications centre staff.

Tuition Bursary for Paramedics

As of January 2023, students enrolled in eligible Primary Care Paramedics (PCP) training receive an \$11,500 tuition bursary used to offset the costs. This covers more than 50% of tuition costs and improves accessibility for interested individuals.

Non-Critical Care Air Transport (NCCT)

Launched August 2023, NCCT is designed to transport those patients in Yarmouth and Sydney, who need highly specialized care, to Halifax.

These measures have shown improvements by freeing up paramedic capacity to focus on emergency responses, increasing retention and recruitment of paramedics and communications officers, and improving accessibility to paramedic training programs. We continue to monitor progress and will adapt our strategies as needed.

I want to assure you that EHS is dedicated to providing quality and timely access to emergency prehospital care for all Nova Scotians. Providing this type of care to hundreds of individuals each day is not without its challenges, however the health and safety of Nova Scotians is our priority, and EHS will continue to work diligently to provide high quality out-of-hospital care throughout the province.

Thank you for raising these concerns with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Honourable Michelle Thompson
Minister of Health and Wellness

c: Nolan Young, MLA - Shelburne