

November 27, 2013

Mr. Justice Paul R. Bélanger
Commissioner
Elliot Lake Commission of Inquiry
2380 St-Laurent Boulevard
Ottawa, ON K1G 6C4

Dear Commissioner Bélanger:

The Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) commends the work of the Elliot Lake Inquiry established following the tragic events surrounding the June 23, 2012 collapse at the Algo Centre Mall in the City of Elliot Lake. Further to AMO's participation in the Commission's Roundtable Part I, held during the week of November 18th, 2013, AMO further welcomes the opportunity to participate at the Commission's Roundtable Part II, relating to the conduct and management of emergency response.

AMO's mandate is to support and enhance strong and effective municipal government in Ontario and to promote the value of the municipal level of government as a vital and essential component of Ontario and Canada's political system. Municipal governments have an important role in the health, safety and well-being of Ontarians through municipal programming and through regulatory administration and enforcement; most notably as was demonstrated in Roundtable Part I, in the context of building infrastructure, the *Building Code*, *Fire Code*, and municipal property standards by-laws.

Focusing on Roundtable Part II, it is noted that generally speaking, municipal personnel are the first to respond to emergencies such as fire, police and EMS. Municipalities are also directly impacted by emergencies as demonstrated by the experience with the City of Elliot Lake, and many other emergency examples across Canada, such as the tragic train derailment in the Town of Lac-Mégantic, QC, in July, 2013. In Ontario, municipalities have a legislated role in the conduct and management of emergency response as set out in the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.E.9. Significant changes to this legislation have occurred over the course of the last decade relating to emergency management and response. The Commission's focus on this important area is welcomed by AMO in order to identify any potential improvements to Ontario's emergency management and response system.

I am pleased to provide you once again with an AMO staff response, developed with the assistance of a small group of municipal emergency management coordinators, to the Policy Roundtable questions, reflecting the considerations from Ontario's municipal governments. Please note that this is a staff response and has not been approved by the AMO Board or Executive.

Incident Management System Related Issues

Incident Management System (IMS) is designed to be flexible and adaptable. As a result, IMS principles, concepts and organizational structure are designed to be applied to any size municipality or any type of decision centre. Having said that, the IMS principle of "Unity and Chain of Command" can present an issue for emergency management and response where there may not be an understanding of the IMS system or willingness to integrate into a single response and management structure under IMS. A function based approach under IMS seeks to improve integration and help break down "silos" of services. The current Provincial doctrine for IMS is the same as other jurisdictions across North America. However, one recommendation would be to make terminology consistent across response and management entities. Consistent terminology is one of the main benefits of IMS. Keeping terminology consistent across the response and management entities will assist with clarify of interoperable communications. This is critical to the success of IMS implementation. Any possible confusion on IMS terminology in an emergency management situation could further endanger the public and the first responders. Additionally, consideration should be given to making certain elements of IMS mandatory to allow for better planning, such as Incident Action plans and the planning operation/planning cycle.

Organization of Search and Rescue Teams

Consideration should be given that the Ontario Government assumes the role of sufficiently funding local search and rescue teams. This would include funding, and coordinating the provision of services and assisting with transporting into needed areas. With that being said, if municipal search and rescue teams are properly funded, it is not necessary for the Ontario Provincial Police and the Office of the Fire Marshal to manage discreet search and rescue resources. Municipalities have the local expertise to carry out this task.

Decentralized Emergency Management

The model of "bottom-up response" established by the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and its regulations should be clarified to indicate that even in a 'bottom-up response' model, the added assistance by the Province does not necessarily mean a 'take over command & control' model. Provincial assets should seamlessly contribute to the overall response effort being managed at the local level. The Province may choose to intervene at a media level if media attention grows to national or international levels, but local contacts/protocols are already in place and the local perspective must always be represented and respected.

Municipalities need to be adequately supported by the Province through funding and through resources to better prepare for emergency situations.

A directory of vital services available to municipal governments and the provincial government would be helpful in understanding the resources available (such as heavy equipment and lumber) in a given situation. However, emergency response/management-related entities should not be mandated/ required to maintain a directory of emergency-related vital services. This is outside the capacity of entities to maintain a regional or provincial directory on an on-going basis. This would make for a recommended best practice, but should not be made a mandate, particularly without additional funding.

Issues Relating to the Entities that may Respond to an Emergency

There is a role and requirement for heavy search and rescue teams as well as more medium and/or light teams. Both types could be of use, depending on the scale of an emergency situation. Teams could be located strategically, around the province, for coverage and quick response in different areas of the province (north, south, east, west).

Other entities (such as Ontario Mine Rescue) can be assessed to understand capabilities to be utilized and integrated into the current emergency response structure. It is a provincial responsibility to integrate resources on a provincial scale. Additionally, thought should be given to the ability to access federal assets (such as cargo transport planes) to be deployed, particularly if they are the appropriate resource/asset.

Deployment of Search and Rescue Assets

To ensure that sufficient personnel are deployed to particular emergencies, an assessment will need to be made at the onset. The process could consist of assessing the request, followed by on-going assessment once on the ground, coupled with the ability to access more if needed.

To ensure that sufficient personnel are deployed with training in specialized areas (such as rigging, planning), training requirements can be implemented into required criteria for deployment.

Consistency in Response

In an emergency situation, when more than one entity responds to an emergency, a command approach that identifies the needed functions in a specific situation should be used to recognize and respect the responding entities.

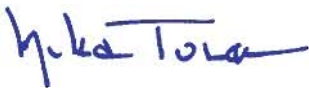
It is recommended that emergency-related entities train together for emergency response planning to better understand the hierarchy of command needed for different situations.

Additionally, it is agreed that there should be greater consistency in training standards among emergency related entities. However, consistency is difficult to achieve throughout a diverse province (i.e. large urban vs. small rural) with different needs. Municipal governments are responsible for those mandated activities within their jurisdictions,

whereas those activities that require coordination and consistency across municipal boundaries are best funded and managed by the Province. Additional funding and resources for better access to timely and appropriate training would need to be provided by the Province.

On behalf of AMO, I thank you again for ensuring that representatives of Ontario's municipal governments are part of your discussion on this important public safety matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Monika Turner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Monika Turner
Director of Policy

