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Accountability: Understanding the effect of governance structures on land ambulance services in Ontario, connected by Consolidated Municipal Services Management (CMSM) agreements

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MPA Research Report

Submitted to

The Local Government Program
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ABSTRACT

Ontario has seen significant changes across the municipal landscape, including the realignment of service responsibilities. One of the products of this realignment was the introduction of the CMSM program in 1998, which saw local municipalities take on the responsibilities for many services, including land ambulance.

Land ambulance is an important life-saving service (Aringhieri et al. 2017). Decision-makers must ensure that such services must be delivered with optimal performance. As a public service in Ontario, this includes democratic performance. Crucial to the anchorage of democratic performance is accountability.

Accountability is a transaction of information, dialogue, and rewards/sanctions (Brandsma and Schillemans 2012). It is an important component of democracy. While much attention has been paid to accountability at the provincial and federal levels, there is a growing body of research into accountability at the local level (Spicer 2017; Arnbuckle 2018).

This study aims to contribute to this growing body of literature by considering the vital service of land ambulance and the unique institutions of city-county separation along with the imposed CMSM program.

By asking the question “In areas where city-county institutions are established, to what extent is the accountability gap in land ambulance services agreements effected by the governance model of the service provider”, this study contributes to the empirical data around accountability, inter-municipal agreements, and SPBs.

Through a quantitative test and description, this paper first quantifies the extent of accountability in 13 city-county services, confirming that while land-ambulance services generally perform well, governance structures do correlate with improved performance. Additionally, using a comparative case study, this study qualitatively describes the findings in

two similar municipalities with different governance structures, supporting the GAT findings and describing how municipalities can improve their accountability.

In sum, this paper finds that in the 13 agreements/services studied, SPB governance structures have superior performance to direct and contract delivery. However, partnerships that have or can produce annual reports, create clear complaints processes, establish joint committees (or boards) with representation from all partner municipalities, do correlate with a strong performance in accountability.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMSM	Consolidated Municipal Services Manager
EWEMS	Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services
GAT	Governance Assessment Tool
MLEMSA	Middlesex London Emergency Medical Services Authority
MLPS	Middlesex-London Paramedic Service
SPB	Special Purpose Board

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1990s, Ontario underwent significant changes across the municipal landscape. In particular, the election of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1995 was elected on a promise to lower taxes (Ibbitson 1997). To accomplish this, the Province pursued the elimination and amalgamation of municipalities (Siegel 2005). Further, Ontario set out to upload and download services with municipalities (Graham and Phillips 1998). Accordingly, one of the tools used by the Province was the introduction of the CMSM system in 1998, under the Local Services Realignment framework (Ontario 1998). With the creation of the CMSM system, local municipalities took on delivery and *partial* funding role in many services (Spicer 2015). The Provincial government “downloaded” these responsibilities, in an effort to, among other reasons, improve fiscal efficiency (Ontario 1999). The services that municipalities found themselves responsible for were social housing, childcare, social assistance, public health, and land ambulance.

In total, the province created 37 CMSMs for southern Ontario, along with 10 district social services boards in northern Ontario. These CMSMs in effect forced inter-municipal services agreements, as designated CMSMs became responsible for service delivery for their neighbouring municipalities (Spicer 2015). Previous research has been completed measuring accountability in these types of relationships (Spicer 2017, Lyons and Spicer 2018). Further, research has been completed on CMSM organizations (Spicer 2015, Spicer 2016) in Ontario. What remains to be studied, however, are the relationships specific to land ambulance service, which was “downloaded” as part of this provincial realignment.

Consequently, the Harris government in Ontario downloaded land-ambulance delivery from the province to designated CMSM’s. This decision was in part due to findings of the 1998

Ontario Auditor General's report, which highlights accountability as one of the goals of local services realignment (Ontario 1998; Prno 2002). With the stated goal of increasing accountability, one should question if this is achieved equally despite the governance model that the CMSM chooses for land ambulance delivery.

Land ambulance services are important. Paramedics provide care throughout Ontario, through land and air ambulance services, to residents daily and play a vital role in saving lives by reducing the rate of mortality and morbidity (Aringhieri et al. 2017). Notably, modern paramedic services have decreased the mortality from a heart attack from 8.9 percent to just 1.9 percent (Le May et al. 2006). Crucially, paramedic care is common throughout Ontario. In 2018, provincial data reveals that 1,151,360 patients were transported by paramedics (Ontario, 2019).

Land ambulance delivery models affect their democratic performance (Longeway 2020). Democratic performance can include measures such as authorization, efficiency, or accountability, and there has been longstanding interest in measuring and analyzing these performance criteria within public agencies (Boyne 2006). Decision-makers must be informed by research to decide which model is best for the service being provided. Unfortunately, despite the equally important service they provide, land ambulance services have not received the same attention as has been paid to the delivery models for police and fire services (Found 2012; Sancton 2015). Delivery models for ambulance services in Canada vary by province. In many provinces, responsibility has been retained by the Province for land ambulance services (BC Health Services 2020; Longeway 2020). Other provinces, such as Alberta, have regionalized the provision of land ambulance services through a combination of Health Authorities and Fire Departments (Health Quality Council of Alberta 2013). As previously stated, Ontario land

ambulance delivery is the responsibility of municipalities, designated by the Province (Ambulance Act R.S.O 1990).

Ontario has 55 designated land ambulance services. These services are delivered in the following models;

- Counties with separated cities (13)
- Two-tier municipalities, delivered by the Upper-Tier (11)
- Northern district social services boards (10)
- Single tier municipalities (8)
- Indigenous leadership within designated Indian Reserves (6)
- The regional municipality (6)
- Two separated cities, where one is designated the CMSM (1)

In this study, focus will be paid on counties containing separated cities. In each of the 13 services covering counties with separated cities, one of the municipalities has been designated the CMSM for land ambulance services. It is not consistent who the designated CMSM is between the county or the separated city. In Guelph-Wellington for example, Guelph is the designated agent. Whereas in Frontenac-Kingston, Frontenac County administers land ambulance service. Further complicating this is the delivery model chosen by the CMSM. In Middlesex-London, Middlesex County has formed an ambulance special-purpose board (SPB) to deliver service. Of the remaining 12 services, three are delivered through contracting service delivery, with the balance delivered directly by the municipality.

This paper seeks to measure the relative accountability of land ambulance services, provided in Ontario under CMSM agreements. To accomplish this, the paper will use a modified Governance Assessment Tool (GAT) to operationalize the performance of each ambulance

service included in the study. What follows the qualitative section is a case comparison between Middlesex-London Paramedic Service (MLPS) and Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services (EWEMS). By using a modified GAT to quantitatively measure these inter-municipal relationships, and by comparing the various models delivered in this group, predictors of strong performance can be sought. What's more, taking these predictors and examining case examples will further support the GAT findings.

This paper intends to further strengthen the academic literature on CMSM agreements, vital municipal service delivery, and the GAT as a tool for measuring. It also aims to inform municipalities who are charged with the responsibility for land ambulance delivery in Ontario, by providing predictors of a strong framework for accountability. Through quantitative and case analysis, this work finds that there is variation, consistent with previous research (Spicer 2017; Lyons and Spicer 2018) in the so-called "accountability and transparency gap" (Spicer 2017, pp. 389) across the 13 land ambulance services studied. Additionally, that this variation has identifiable characteristics, easily deployed by municipalities, that predict strong democratic performance in accountability.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Accountability

Accountability is broadly defined as an "obligation to answer for the performance of duties" (Badie et al. 2011, pp. 1). For this paper, I will be considering political accountability. Political accountability is generally regarded as a symbol of representative democracy, requiring those exercising the public's authority to be evaluated (Spicer 2017). The so-called principal-agent relationship, where the principal is the voter and the agent is the elected official or administrative staff member (Brandsma and Schillemans 2012; Lyons 2020). Fearon described this as, "person

A is accountable to another, B, if two conditions are met. First, there is an understanding that A is obligated to act in some way on behalf of B. Second, B is empowered by some formal institution or perhaps informal rules to sanction or reward A for her activities or performance in this capacity” (1999, pp. 55). After all, accountability has no power or authority without a system of rewards or enforcement (Lyons 2020).

Research by Ebrahim and Weisband, extrapolate accountability to four components; transparency, answerability, compliance, and enforcement (2007). Where information must be collected and made public for scrutiny. Actions or inactions must then be justified through reasoning for questioning. Evaluation of procedures and outcomes findings must be reported, where the application of sanctions may be imposed for shortcomings (Ebrahim and Weisband 2007; Spicer 2017).

While there have been significant amounts of research on political accountability, much of this work has been completed at the provincial and federal levels of government (Arnuckle 2018). Where there have been studies looking at municipal level accountability, most of it has been done in the context of the United States (Breux and Couture 2018).

Canadian municipal context has been accumulating in recent years and helps to provide some basis for this paper. In 2014, scholar Sancton’s analysis of municipal elections demonstrated “that the conventional model (principal-agent) for such accountability involves attentive voters informed...about the actions of local elected members of council. It is easy to see how this model fails...it was difficult for voters to monitor the actions of their local non-partisan council” (2018, pp. 146). Voters reinforce mechanisms of accountability since they are able to judge the government based on the implementation of electoral promises (Breux and Couture 2018). Further, Spicer added to the Canadian empirical evidence when he measured accountability and

transparency with inter-municipal service agreements (2017). Spicer concludes that these agreements score poorly in part due to public access measures, and states that “holding agents to account requires a supply of information” (2017, pp. 391). Putting these concepts together, Arnbuckle explores accountability through the Ontario Integrity Commissioner, where among other findings reveals “[the] lack of information at the municipal level reoccurs as the theme in the overall ability for the municipal voter to hold politicians to account” (2018, pp. 8). Interestingly, in 2020, Lyons explores accountability for Canadian Special Purpose Boards (SPBs). He concludes that although information is often more available to voters (Lyons and Spicer 2018), sanctions can be difficult to apply as SPBs are further removed from their line of sight (Lyons 2020).

Accountability is an interchange of information, dialogue, and rewards/sanctions (Brandsma and Schillemans 2012). However, what many researchers have found is ultimately a lack of information being provided to the principal/voter (Spicer 2017; Sancton 2018; Arnbuckle 2018). When information is available, such as the case for SPBs, rewards, and sanctions can be difficult to apply (Lyons 2020). From these findings, this paper will continue to build on the literature that attempts to measure accountability in the Canadian municipal context, using land ambulance service agreements.

2.2 Special Purpose Boards (SPBs)

When the term government is used, the first thing that often comes to people’s minds is national, state, and perhaps municipal governments. Rarely do people think about SPBs (Lyons 2020) even though conservative estimations suggest that there are approximately 8,000 SPBs across Canada (Richmond and Siegel 1994; Tindal and Tindal 2004; Sancton 2015; Lyons 2020).

Despite being extremely common, they are often less visible than general-purpose governments (Sancton 2015).

The question of what SPBs are and why they exist requires further discussion. First, it should be noted that significant variation in how SPBs can be formed (Sancton 2015; Lyons 2020) exists. However, for the purposes of this paper, it will be limited to the Canadian context. Within Canada, the formation of SPBs is limited to federal and provincial governments, as well as municipalities (Richmond and Siegel 1994; Lyons 2015). SPBs are very similar to local governments, however, they are limited to a single function or purpose (Siegel 1994a; Sancton 2015; Lyons 2020). Examples of common SPBs are police or library boards. Secondly, SPBs can be established across multiple jurisdictions (Sancton 2015), and are at times formed intentionally when multiple municipalities or levels of government are involved.

Intergovernmental SPBs that a commonplace within the Canadian landscape is conservation authorities. As Sancton notes, “institutions have generally been designed to help solve real problems in the real world rather than to look neat on an organizational chart” (2015, pp.45). This is true of conservation authorities where jurisdictional boundaries are decided based upon watersheds, rather than municipal boundaries (Sancton 2015). Similarly, other scholars have noted that SPBs are designed “around the geography of the problem” (Hooghe and Marks 2003; Lyons 2020, pp. 145).

Although there is limited study on SPBs, there has been much debate around the “democratic anchorage” of SPBs (Lyons 2020, pp.161). This is linked with the variation in board formation, between elected and non-elected actors (Sancton 2015). Further, the debate concerning SPBs between polycentrists and consolidationists is ongoing (Lyons 2015). Polycentrists argue for cross-jurisdictional, functionally specialized institutions, where consolidationists prefer single,

large general-purpose governments (Mullin 2009; Lyons 2015). With the focus of this paper being accountability within Ontario land ambulance services, which provide service to counties with separated cities, the scope of the literature review will set aside the polycentrist and consolidationist debate. Rather, further exploration into the literature of inter-local/governmental SPBs was completed.

The use of SPBs for service delivery is increasing, despite the lack of scholarly study into SPBs and inter-local agreements (Lyons and Spicer 2018). Perhaps one of the reasons for the increase in SPBs for service delivery can be explained by the work of Siegel who provides factors for determining whether or not to deliver service through SPB (1994b). These factors are “the need for multi-jurisdictional service area, intergovernmental coordination, organizational flexibility, and arm’s-length decision-making (Siegel 1994b). These findings were supported by Lyons when he concludes that SPBs who work across multiple jurisdictions, fulfill their mandate better than SPBs within single governments (Lyons 2015).

Looking at the land ambulance sector within Ontario, many ambulance services provide care to multiple municipalities. For a majority of these ambulance services, the circumstances described by Siegel are not factors within the municipality designated as responsible for service delivery. Examples of this are single-tier or two-tier systems, regional governments, and Indigenous Indian Reserves. However, for counties with separated cities and Northern District Services Boards, Siegel’s circumstances are present and the question about the value of SPBs should be considered. Within the scope of this paper, studying the 13 land ambulance services in counties with separated cities, one service has formed an SPB – MLPS.

2.3 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs)

The ability to connect rural and urban areas continues to challenge provincial and municipal policy makers due to the realities of economic and physical geography (Sweet 1999; Spicer 2016). As a result, both distinctive areas were provincially granted institutions for governance, which further cemented their uniqueness and divide (Spicer 2016). “City-county separation was the original method of organizing municipalities in the Province of Ontario” (Spicer 2014, pp.245) and is a structure that continues today within the province (Spicer 2015). Despite these institutional and geographical differences throughout Ontario, Provincial policy requires that all 444 municipalities (Lyons 2020) work together to deliver services deemed to be partially or wholly the responsibility of local governments (Graham and Phillips 1998; Spicer 2015).

How municipalities in Ontario work together is largely based upon their local governance structures. Ontario examples include single-tier municipalities, regional governments, two-tier systems, or the aforementioned city-county scenarios. Regardless of the local circumstances, Ontario introduced the Consolidated Municipal Services Manger system, as a means for designating the responsibility for service delivery to one municipality (Spicer 2015). These CMSM designations that were introduced in 1998 also included the responsibility for partial funding of these services (Spicer 2015). This in effect, was the Provincial government's method of realigning provincial services and downloading financial and oversight responsibilities to the municipal governments, as part of their “Common Sense Revolution” election promises (Graham and Phillips 1998; Spicer 2014, 2015).

With the implementation of the CMSM program, the result for many areas, such as regional or two-tier municipalities, was a very clear and sensible pathway (Spicer 2014) to “who does what” (Graham and Phillips 1998). However, this was not the case for city-county communities, where analysis demonstrated variation in how CMSM arrangements would be decided (Spicer

2015). “Unlike other municipalities in the province, the [Provincial] government did not provide guidelines for how separated cities and counties would divide related costs and responsibilities...[leading] in some cases, multiple CMSM agreements to cover [all] policy responsibilities” (Spicer 2014, pp. 250). Suddenly, municipalities separated by design were foisted into service partnerships. What’s more, these service responsibilities under the Local Services Realignment (Ontario 1999), were important and indeed expensive services to deliver (Spicer 2014), including social services and land ambulance (Ontario 1998a; Prno 2002).

The study into CMSM agreements is very limited, likely due to their uniqueness within Ontario. However, what has been studied is the prevalence of these agreements, which demonstrates that while city-county relationships scarcely use formal inter-municipal agreements, the majority of agreements in place are CMSMs (Spicer 2014). Further, studies have demonstrated that the unique city-county separation within Ontario posed a hindrance to the implementation of the CMSM program, leading to local frustration and costly arbitrations (Spicer 2015). Finally, empirical research has been conducted on the accountability and transparency of inter-municipal agreements and SPBs, of which some form part of the CMSM program (Spicer 2017; Lyons and Spicer 2018).

In sum, CMSMs were implemented by the Province of Ontario as a mechanism for downloading services to municipalities. While these agreements are commonplace provincially, they are not well studied (Spicer 2015). There is a further paucity of literature where CMSM agreements meet city-county separation, where governance structures appear to improve the accountability of inter-local cooperation (Lyons and Spicer 2018).

2.4 Governance Assessment Tool (GAT)

There has been longstanding interest in measuring and analyzing the performance of public agencies (Boyne 2006). This is particularly true when it comes to cooperative service agreements, as researchers have described an indistinct line of accountability whenever a single government is not solely responsible for service delivery (Lyons and Spicer 2018). As previously mentioned, the practice of inter-governmental and inter-local cooperation agreements is increasing (Spicer 2015). What's more, the types of services that are being cooperatively delivered, such as emergency protection, are important (Spicer 2017). Formal agreements for this service delivery are normally established and described among other responsibilities, financial obligations (Andrew 2008, 2009). However, with such vital services being delivered in this manner, scholars need to understand the extent to which accountability is being impacted.

To better measure the “accountability and transparency gap” (Spicer 2017, pp.389) with cooperation agreements, many researchers have made different attempts at this aim. Accountability is a challenging concept to empirically measure, largely related to the variability with governments and institutions (Lyons and Spicer 2018). Some scholars have attempted to measure accountability expectations (Wang 2002), the degree to which levied sanctions have enforced standards (Henretty and Koop 2011), and studies into mapping accountability networks (Brandsma and Schillemans 2012). However, in recent years, a modified Governance Assessment Tool (GAT) has been used in the Ontario local government context to build empirical evidence concerning such cooperative agreements, as well as their related governance structures.

Originally developed by Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith (2005), the GAT was operationalized to measure the democratic performance of various public services through cooperative agreements in the United Kingdom. While all agreements are committed to delivering service to

the public, not all delivery agents are as committed to their democratic performance (Lyons and Spicer 2018). Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith implemented their GAT to provide empirical data, measuring the degree of accountability and transparency. The original tool (see Table 2.1) comprised of criteria for public access internal governance, member conduct, and external accountability. All of which was determined to be a basic and achievable framework for accountability (Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith 2005; Lyons and Spicer 2018). If we return to the conceptualization by Ebrahim and Weisband on accountability (2007), the GAT provides critique for criteria concerning; transparency, answerability, compliance, and enforcement (Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith 2005; Ebrahim and Weisband 2007).

Table 2.1

Governance Assessment Criteria	
A.	Public Access
1.	Are meetings of the board advertised?
2.	Are meetings of the board open to the press and public?
3.	Are the public entitled to see reports considered by the board?
4.	Are the reports that the board will consider available for the public to consult prior to the meeting?
5.	Are the public entitled to see minutes of the board meetings?
6.	Is there an annual general meeting that the public can attend?
B.	Internal Governance
1.	Does the partnership have a memorandum of association or other document defining its role and powers?
2.	Does the partnership have a written constitution or set of standing orders defining how it will conduct business at meetings?
3.	Is membership for a limited period of time?
4.	Does a quorum apply at board meetings?
5.	Are written minutes of board meetings produced?
6.	Are there allowances or other payments for members?
C.	Member Conduct
1.	Is there a code of conduct to regulate the behaviour of members at board meetings?
2.	If there is a code, are board members required to agree to be bound by it?
3.	Is there a register in which board members detail their financial and other interests?
4.	Is there a system for declaring conflicts of interest at meetings?
5.	Is there a procedure for ensuring that members declaring conflicts of interest take no part in the decision?
D.	Accountability
1.	Does the partnership have to prepare an annual report?

2. Does the partnership have to prepare an annual budget?
3. Does the partnership have to prepare annual accounts?
4. Is the partnership subject to external audit?
5. Is the partnership subject to external inspection?
6. Is there a complaints process available to citizens or service users?
7. Is the partnership under the jurisdiction of an ombudsmen or inspectorate?
8. Is the partnership required to meet targets agreed with any other bodies?
9. Does the partnership take a formal report to any other bodies?
10. Can members be recalled by their nominating bodies?

Source: Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith (2005)

What is of particular help in answering the research question of this paper, is the modified GAT (Lyons 2014; Spicer 2017; Lyons and Spicer 2018). The need for a modification by Canadian researchers (see table 3.2) was a result of the nature of municipal agreements within Ontario, which are often are less complex than the original partnerships studied in the United Kingdom (Spicer 2017). What follows in the Canadian context are three studies which demonstrate overall poor accountability and transparency with inter-municipal service partnerships, with improved performance in these agreements when an SPB governance structure is in place (Lyons 2014; Spicer 2017; Lyons and Spicer 2018). It is expected that this study will find similar conclusions to these Canadian analyses. Ideally, further adding to the empirical data on SPBs and inter-municipal agreements, while providing the new context of CMSM agreements in counties with separated cities.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Aim and Question

The review of the above literature provides an overall context as it relates to accountability with CMSM agreements, and how governance structures affect accountability in inter-local agreements more broadly. Additionally, this review highlights the gaps where further study can

be targeted in order to add empirical evidence to both the data on Ontario's city-county CMSM agreements and SPBs.

With the commonality of CMSM agreements throughout Ontario and the uniqueness of city-county separation, the incentive to study this relatively unexplored area clear. Does the combination of such agreements and these institutions hold up to a test of accountability? Generally, this research aims to better understand these ideas, and provide both scholars and practitioners with more evidence to guide future policy in this area.

As previously presented in the literature review, accountability matters. It is a hallmark of our democratic governments (Spicer 2017). In the end, citizens want to know that the services being provided are visible to them and that they have the ability to act if they are pleased or dissatisfied with those services. This is particularly true when it comes to services that people depend on during an emergency.

Vital services, such as land ambulance, are being delivered under CMSM agreements every day throughout Ontario. This knowledge, along with the knowledge of the previously described work on inter-local agreements and their effect on accountability, is critical that researchers aim to explore the extent to which the accountability of vital services are affected by these agreements.

The research question is therefore; In areas where city-county institutions are established, to what extent is the accountability gap in land ambulance services agreements affected by the governance model of the service provider?

3.2 Case Selection

Within the province of Ontario, there are 55 designated land ambulances, providing care across all 444 municipalities. However, the scope of this project is intended to measure the

CMSM agreements that are in place within communities that have city-county separation.

Therefore, for the GAT analysis portion of the study, the units of analysis will be the 13 land ambulance services that meet these criteria. These services are listed in the table below (table 3.1);

Table 3.1

Cornwall	Leeds and Grenville
Elgin	Middlesex-London
Essex-Windsor	Perth
Frontenac-Kingston	Peterborough
Guelph-Wellington	Renfrew
Hastings	Simcoe
Lanark	

Despite the limited number of cases meeting the scope of this project, there is good variation in governance models and service delivery. Of the 13, one CMSM has established an SPB for service delivery (Middlesex County). With the remaining 12, three are involved in some degree of contracting-out (Elgin, Lanark, and Perth). Further, there is some variation in the number of municipalities involved in each CMSM, from two to four municipalities.

For the next portion of this paper, a comparative case study analysis of a purposive sample of two land ambulance services within Ontario will be undertaken using a cross-sectional (snapshot) nested (mixed approached) research design. For this case selection, Middlesex-London's land ambulance service is the first case selected as it is the only land ambulance service governed by an SPB. In order to better understand how the SPB affects accountability

(*dependent variable*), it must be compared with a case where the municipality does not have an SPB. To control for other variables, a land ambulance service with otherwise most similar characteristics must be sought, in an attempt to best isolate the governance structure (*independent variable*). For this purpose, Essex-Windsor-Pelee poses as a good comparator for Middlesex-London. Most similar in population size, urban-rural ratio, large Ontario University and College populations, and where both designated CMSM agents are the county municipalities. Further, despite the small separated township of Pelee within Essex-Windsor, both land-ambulance services provide care to one large rural upper-tier municipality and one large separated city.

3.3 Data Sources

3.3.1 Governance Assessment Tool Analysis

The main source of data that was used to inform the completion of the GAT is the 13 CMSM agreements themselves. All agreements are publically available as they are passed municipally, as by-laws. These documents were used to answer many of the criteria within the GAT, specifically those pertaining to the domains of public access and internal governance.

To further aid the completion of the GAT, websites for the paramedic services and their associated municipalities were used. This proves to be a great source of information, as this information helps to inform the GAT domains of public access and accountability. Further, it is similarly available to the public.

Combined, the agreements and website information are an eloquent way for this paper to give me a similar sense of what is readily accessible to the public. Relying on this accessible information gives a “fair” indication of what residents might expect for land ambulance service information, which by nature of the GAT, belongs in the public sphere (Lyons and Spicer 2018).

3.3.2 Case Study Analysis

Information sources used to inform the two case reviews primarily comes from secondary sources, such as council reports, CMSM agreements, media reports, Statistics Canada, municipal website, and land ambulance service websites. The information on the two cases bolsters the GAT findings, as well as informs how these agreements are working in practice.

3.4 Operationalizing Concepts

For this project, the researcher employs a *positivist* research ontology to quantitatively *test* (hypothesis) and describe (what) the variations in accountability (*Dependent Variable*) between city-county ambulance services, with different governance structures (*Independent Variable*). It uses a *deductive* research strategy that has a mixed-method (*nested*) approach. The paper first quantifies the extent of accountability in 13 city-county services, confirming broader theoretical knowledge and previous quantitative findings. Secondly, using a *comparative case study*, the paper employs a *purposive selection* and qualitatively describes the findings in two similar municipalities. These findings of these municipalities, with separate governance structures, support the GAT findings.

3.4.1 Governance Assessment Tool Analysis

In order to operationalize this study and measure the extent of accountability in 13 city-county services, the GAT was used.

As previously described, the GAT was originally provided by Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith (2005) was subsequently adapted by several researchers. Each looking at quantitative studies of accountability and/or transparency in inter-governmental partnerships (Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith 2005; Lyons 2014; Spicer 2017; Lyons and Spicer 2018). The need for Canadian researchers Spicer and Lyons to adapt the original tool was a result of the nature of

municipal agreements within Ontario, which Spicer described as “often less complex than the original partnerships studied in the United Kingdom” by Skelcher et al (2017, pp. 394).

Accordingly, for the purposes of this study being conducted within the Ontario context, the modified GAT was selected.

Similar to the Canadian adaptations of the GAT, the scoring range from 0 to 1 (1 if a criterion is met, 0.5 if partially met and 0 if not met) is used to measure and compare accountability relationships (Lyons 2014; Spicer 2017). The GAT provides a score for each criterion within three larger domains; public access, internal governance, and accountability. For the study by Spicer (2017), these three domains each contained 5 criteria, allowing for a possible score of 15 for each agreement. The original criteria included by Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith (2005) had a possible score of 27 (see table 2.1).

For the purposes of this study, the modified tool used by Spicer (2017) was further modified to include three further criteria (see table 3.2), felt to be relevant to the context of land ambulance service delivery and to provide clearer detail for analysis.

Table 3.2

Modified Governance Assessment Criteria	
A.	Public Access
1.	Are agreements available to the public?
2.	Are provisions made to have public meetings?
3.	Are the public entitled to see reports regarding performance?
4.	Is a contact provided in the agreement?
5.	Are the public entitled to see minutes of meetings?
B.	Internal Governance
1.	Does the agreement define specific roles for each partner?
2.	Are meetings scheduled?
3.	Are there written standards for communication?
4.	Are there written standards for budgeting?
5.	Do all municipalities have a voice through board/committee?
6.	Are written meetings minutes required?
C.	Accountability
1.	Does the partnership have to prepare an annual report?

- | | |
|----|--|
| 2. | Does the partnership have to prepare an annual budget? |
| 3. | Is the 2020 detailed approved budget available? |
| 4. | Is the partnership subject to external audit? |
| 5. | Is there a complaints process available to citizens or service users? |
| 6. | Does the partnership describe who represents each community? |
| 7. | Does the partnership describe who is financially responsible for service delivery? |

Adapted
from: Spicer (2017)

The added criteria were;

B5 – This question was added in order to better inform the research question. The question aims to determine if governance structures affect the degree of accountability. Variations in this criterion represent the extent of accountability that elected officials of municipalities who are not designated the CMSM maintain for their communities.

C3 – This question was added to separate municipalities that were providing timely information to their residents. This represents how forthcoming the municipality is with providing financial information and serves as a snap-shot audit for municipalities not consistently providing important information to their community.

C5 – Originally found in the work of Skelcher, Mathur, and Smith (2005), this question was felt to be very relevant for a service as important to the community as land ambulance. Further, as accountability was described above, the ability to readily provide positive or negative feedback represents an important link in the chain of accountability.

In sum, this GAT provides the ability to remain consistent with previous studies in Ontario, adding both external validity to the results of this study, as well as additional empirical evidence to the body of work in this area.

Following the completion of scoring using the above framework (see table 3.2), the scores within each domain are tallied, then divided by their total possible score. The result is each agreement receiving a score from 0.001 to 1.0 for each domain. Additionally, the sum of all criteria was tallied and divided by the total possible score (18). These results were expressed from 0.01 to 1.0 for each agreement. Finally, the average score for each domain and the average overall score were calculated.

The results were analyzed looking for comparisons between domain scores, against the average. Where variation from the average was noted, results of the individual criterion were reviewed, looking for trends that provided insight into better domain performance. Additionally, total scores were compared with the average, and where variation was noted, results of the domains were reviewed, looking for domain trends of overall performance. Overall, the evaluation of the domains and total score help to infer the correlation between governance structure and accountability performance.

3.4.2 Case Study Analysis

The units of analysis (two similar land ambulance services with different governance structures) will be operationalized by utilizing a qualitative review, determining through description how each agreement is working out in practice.

The process includes reviewing the GAT findings in detail for both cases, looking specifically where one outperforms the other. Then reviewing these findings, bolstered by theory and supported by practice, explain the findings of strong and poor performance. The focus on these findings is linked to their models of governance.

The combination of qualitative findings anchored in the empirical GAT scores will be used to support the paper's hypotheses that:

1. When measuring accountability in city-counties institutions, most cases will generally perform poorly, but;
2. In a county with a separated city where an authority board has been established to deliver land ambulance service, this municipality will demonstrate better quantifiable performance, and;
3. That these quantitative findings will be supported by a case study review in two selected cases.

CHAPTER 4 - PRESENTATION OF GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT (GAT) TOOL FINDINGS

In total, all 13 agreements were located and reviewed. Additionally, in each case following the agreement review, the websites of each municipality involved in the agreements were reviewed, looking to inform the GAT. The final scores for each agreement, listed by the ambulance service name, are provided in table (4.1) below.

Table 4.1

		Modified Governance Assessment Criteria			
Services	Number of Municipalities in Partnership	Public Access	Internal Governance	Accountability	Total Score
		Category score	Category score	Category Score	
Cornwall	2	0.8	1.0	0.786	0.86
Elgin	2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.53
Essex-Windsor	3	1.0	0.667	0.857	0.83
Frontenac-Kingston	2	1.0	0.667	0.786	0.81
Guelph-Wellington	2	0.8	0.833	0.857	0.83
Hastings	3	1.0	1.0	0.857	0.94
Lanark	2	0.9	1.0	0.714	0.81

Leeds & Grenville	4	0.8	1.0	0.571	0.77
Middlesex-London	2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Perth	3	0.7	1.0	0.786	0.83
Peterborough	2	1.0	1.0	0.857	0.94
Renfrew	2	1.0	1.0	0.786	0.92
Simcoe	3	1.0	1.0	0.857	0.89
Average Score		0.885	0.987	0.786	0.843
No colour represents direct delivery by the designated CMSM					
Blue represents some degree of contracted service delivery					
Orange represents delivery through SPB					

4.1 Public Access Performance

The domain of public access demonstrates generally strong performance. Despite the variation from 0.5 to 1.0, the average for this domain score is 0.885.

These findings are overall not consistent with Spicer's previous study (2017). In his study, the overall performance in public access was by contrast, very poor. At the time, this was attributed to the challenges faced with obtaining the agreements with ease, or at all. In that study, however, there were a total of 132 agreements reviewed (Spicer 2017) and were across multiple sectors of service delivery. In this study, all 13 agreements were obtained. The only noted variation on this was partial scores (0.5), which were given to those services that have a full or partial model of contracted delivery. This was due to the fact that the CMSM agreements were available to the public, but agreements for the contracted service were not. This is not surprising given the allowances for non-disclosure under the Ontario Municipal Act (Municipal Act SO 2001).

Another finding noted on three agreements that affected the performance in this domain was a lack of contact information for a designated individual at each municipality on the agreements. This finding seems less consequential as the parties involved in the agreement are all clearly

identified. These findings were all noted in services that are delivered directly by the municipality.

Interestingly, in two cases, partial scores were deducted for public meetings and minutes. This was noted in both a direct-delivery and contracted model. In both cases, this was the result of evidence that a subcommittee exists to discuss ambulance service provision, but these meetings did not yield evidence of public access, nor minutes of their proceedings. In both cases, however, there was evidence of ambulance decisions being made at Municipal Council, which was open to the public, with provided minutes.

Seven agreements satisfied all the domain requirements of public access. Six of which were direct-delivery, with one being the only SPB service. An important component of ensuring that the public can hold local governments accountable is access to information (Justice, Melitski, and Smith 2006).

Slack (1993, 1997) states that citizens ought to know who they pay for service, and who they can hold accountable for that service. In general, most of the agreements perform well in the public access domain, with the strongest performances from direct and SPB delivery. Contracted delivery suffers the most, given the lack of publically available information on the service contract.

4.2 Internal Governance Performance

The domain of internal governance also demonstrates generally strong performance. It too has variation from 0.5 to 1.0, with an average for this domain score of a solid 0.897.

In all but four of the 13 agreements reviewed score a complete 1.0 in this entire domain. For those four that did not, they commonly saw their deductions coming from the added B5 question “Do all municipalities have a voice through a board/committee?”. This cohort included three

direct-delivery and one contracted delivery model. As previously stated, variations in this criterion represent the extent of accountability that elected officials of municipalities not designated the CMSM maintain for their communities. The scope of this project does not extend into research regarding authorization, but there remain issues of accountability when there is no elected official providing oversight or input into the service being delivered. Ultimately, voters elect their representatives and have the ability to sanction them for their performance, as part of the requirements for accountability (Fearon 1999; Ebrahim and Weisband 2007). However, when elected officials play no role in the oversight of the service being provided, the ability to sanction does not exist.

Further performance gaps were noted in particular with a contracted delivery model and included no defined meeting schedule or standard by which to communicate between municipalities.

Generally, all agreements performed well across this domain, with an average of 0.897. Of note, the SPB delivery scores a complete 1.0, along with eight other ambulance services that included direct and contracted delivery. Those that performed well all had either a joint subcommittee or authority board that provides representation to the municipalities receiving service, not designated the CMSM.

4.3 Accountability Performance

The domain of accountability is where performance appears to suffer on average (0.786), with consistent variation from 0.5 to 1.0. This demonstrates that there are wider variations in municipalities' commitment to ensuring transparency with service performance, by leaving the community with not enough information by which to form a judgement on the service they are receiving (Lyons and Spicer 2018).

This domain is created as a means to provide insight into the ability for sanctions to be placed upon the principal, within the accountability relationship (Brandsma and Schillemans 2012; Lyons and Spicer 2018). This becomes evident when reviewing the components of this domain, with only one ambulance service creating a formal annual report. Of the remaining 12, one provides some detail to the CMSM municipality's annual report, while the other 11 provide no annual reporting. This lack of consolidated information makes it difficult for the community to have insight into the service that has been provided, form a cost-for-service analysis, and ultimately sanction their decision-makers. The only service that does release an annual report, was the SPB. This may be the result of the arms-length relationship that the SPB has with the municipality, as it is not uncommon to see SPBs, like police services, release annual reports (London Police Services Board 2021) to their community and municipal councils alike.

What's more, only five of the services had a direct complaints process advertised on the service website. This clear pathway for citizens to provide negative feedback is important in demonstrating to the public that you are a service for them, and want to know when the mark is missed. The eight remaining agreements were given partial scores as they all demonstrated general inquiries contact information or instructions. This "laissez-faire" approach however does not provide the same degree of assurance or clarity to the community that the service level being provided is important, and how to provide feedback when it does not live up to their expectations. Of the five that did satisfy the clear complaints process, four were direct-delivery with the fifth being the SPB.

Other noteworthy findings were that three services did not provide a clear and detailed 2020 approved budget. Of these three, two were contract delivery models. In one of these cases, a total dollar figure is available within the municipal budget, however, the details and breakdown of that

spending were unavailable. In the other, no financial figures were readily available through the service or county websites.

With such variation in performance across this domain, it was noted that those who performed best were able to demonstrate a clear complaints process, detailed budget information and in one case, an annual report that highlights the service performance. It should be noted that in five services, the simple addition of such a complaints process and by releasing an annual report would bring their performance to a 1.0, where the SPB performs. The SPBs performance in this domain demonstrates its commitment to providing the community with enough information for them to form a judgement and to levy sanctions, thereby satisfying the accountability relationship (Brandsma and Schillemans 2012; Lyons and Spicer 2018).

4.4 Summative Scores

Having multiple municipalities in the chain of accountability reduces the transparency for the public (Alcantara, Spicer, and Leone 2012). While the performance of land ambulance services using the GAT is better than the scores observed in previous Ontario-based research (Spicer 2017), there is still variation in the overall performance across the 13 agreements and ambulance services studied. The total scores ranged from 0.53 to 1.0. The average overall score was 0.836.

When considering the research question, which considers the governance model, the following table (see table 4.2) details the overall average performance based upon the delivery model.

Table 4.2

Delivery Model	Number of CMSMs	Average Score
Full or Partial Contracting	3	0.694
Special Purpose Board	9	0.867
Direct Delivery	1	1.0

It is clear by breaking down the delivery models that accountability performance changes based upon the model chosen. It should be noted that the sample size for these models is small overall, with significantly more direct delivery than contracting or SPB. It does, however, generally find that direct and SPB perform significantly better than contracted delivery. In the conclusion, further comparison of the SPB and direct-delivery will be explored.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION AND CASE STUDY

5.1 Discussion

With the completion of the GAT analysis, it is beneficial to look at a real-life case comparison to determine if the GAT findings were consistent in two land-ambulance services within Ontario. Further, by purposefully selecting the most similar cases whose only distinct difference is that of the governance model, helps to strengthen previous studies' findings that governance models have an impact on accountability in the real world.

5.2 Introduction of Case Study

As mentioned, this brief case analysis aims to better understand the findings in this study's GAT analysis as well as those of previous work on governance models. To accomplish this qualitative analysis, a most similar cases approach is completed. The one notable difference, however, is the delivery model of the land-ambulance service.

There has been a significant amount of previous studies on the democratic performance related to contract delivery (Breton 1996; Found 2012; Slack and Bird 2013), so it is not the intention of this paper to focus too much on contract delivery. Further, the decisions around determine a desire to contract out are often related to factors around efficiency, and not of accountability. Therefore, this case study looks to compare SPB and direct delivery.

What follows are two case examples of Ontario land-ambulance services. One of which is delivered by an SPB (Middlesex-London Paramedic Service), and the other by direct delivery (Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services). The first case described is Middlesex-London Paramedic Service, which will outline the community it serves, who the designated CMSM is, and some findings of the Service as it relates to the criterion of the GAT. Descriptions of challenges noted in the media will be explored, along with barriers to the governance model. Following that, Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services will be similarly outlined and described, with attention to compare and contrast with the findings in Middlesex-London.

5.2.1 Middlesex-London Paramedic Service

Located in southwestern Ontario, Middlesex County and the City of London are roughly near the midpoint of Detroit and Toronto (Lyons and Spicer 2018). London was incorporated as a city and separated from Middlesex County in 1855 (Spicer 2016). Since then, London has been involved in many annexations of the surrounding counties (Sancton 1998; Spicer 2016). Despite this significant growth over the 160 years, the city continues to be linked to Middlesex County through inter-local and CMSM agreements.

Geographically, the city-county region has 455,526 residents and covers 3,317.27 square kilometers (Statistics Canada 2017b). The average 2015 household income was \$83,802, and the 2021 approved land-ambulance budget for MLPS was \$46,864,128 (London 2021).

The designated CMSM for land-ambulance is the County of Middlesex, which in October 2011 was created through a by-law the Middlesex London Emergency Medical Services Authority (MLEMSA), known as Middlesex-London Paramedic Service (MLPS) (London 2011a). In its original formation, voting members included Middlesex County councilors and the County Chief Administrative Officer (London 2011b).

In 2020, the City of London raised concerns about the lack of board representation and data being provided by the SPB to the city (London 2020a; Newcombe 2020). The concerns raised about data were largely dismissed as the SPB releases an annual report through County Council (Middlesex-London Paramedic Service 2020). However, the charge of board representation was cause for action, and in response to these concerns, the County of Middlesex amended the SPB composition to include elected representation from the City of London (London 2020b).

When looking at the performance of MLPS's SPB in the GAT, the agreement/land-ambulance service score a complete 18 points out of a possible 18 (see table 4.1). These findings would have been poorer, had the GAT been completed prior to the change in board composition, when the City of London was permitted Council representation. This proves to be an important step forward in improving the SPBs overall accountability.

Crucial to the success in remaining accountability, the MLEMSA board holds public meetings, with publically available agendas and minutes. Further, due to the SPBs arms-length relationship with the County, MLPS presents an annual report and a detailed budget to both the City and County, once approved by the SPB.

One of the design features of the MLEMSA board is that it does not have the authority to levy taxes directly, and must receive budget approval from Middlesex County (London 2021). This differentiates itself from common SPBs, such as police and public health boards, who have independent abilities to levy taxes (Sancton 2015). This ensures that elected officials maintain authority over the budget and taxation. Whether by design or not, this feature does improve accountability and prevents the frequent criticism of SPBs, that they are a step removed from the electoral process (Lyons 2020).

When Lyons and Spicer examined SPBs and inter-municipal agreements in London, they concluded that “SPBs perform much better than inter-local agreements, and some SPBs perform much better than others” (2018, pp. 192). They note that SPBs who performed better were those that provided a large amount of access and information to the public (Lyons and Spicer 2018). This was because this information allows for the public more opportunity for scrutiny and to hold elected officials to account.

When considering the local context of the MLEMSA, the findings of this study’s GAT, and the previous examinations of other researchers, the results appear to be consistent. MLPS performs well in the GAT because;

- MLEMSA provides the public large amounts of data and information, and,
- MLEMSA provides the partnering municipality a voice on the service provision through board representation, and,
- MLEMSA holds public meetings with available agendas and minutes, and,
- MLPS provides a clearly stated complaints process for residents and service users to submit concerns with service, and,
- The County of Middlesex maintains the ultimate authority on budget and tax levy approvals.

5.2.2 Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services

Turning the focus nearly 200km down Ontario’s highway 401, I will now consider the city-county community of the County of Essex, City of Windsor, and Pelee Island. Incorporated in 1858 originally as Sandwich, Windsor has been separated from its surrounding rural counties since (Windsor 2021). Similar to London, the City of Windsor has continued to grow through

annexation but remains linked to neighbouring counties for municipal service delivery, namely the Province's CMSM program.

The first noted difference between these cases is the number of municipalities that are involved in the region's CMSM agreements. While Essex County and the City of Windsor are joined by the Township of Pelee Island, the overall population and landmass, do not change the ability to compare these cases. The region has a population of 398,953 (Statistics Canada 2017a) and covers 1,850.90 square kilometers.

The average 2015 household income was \$85,824, and the 2021 approved land-ambulance budget for EWEMS was \$50,501,300 (Essex 2020).

Since the introduction of the CMSM program in Ontario, the County of Essex has been the designated CMSM for land-ambulance, following a year-long arbitration process. The arbitration process was concerning the financial cost-sharing of services downloaded as part of the CMSM program (Rice 1999). Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services (EWEMS) was officially formed in 2001, and over the course of 8 years, took over service for pre-existing contracted land-ambulance providers to ultimately form a direct delivery model in 2009 (Duck 2016).

Following the arbitration, tensions were high as a result of merging the cultures by a forced city-county partnership (Spicer 2016; Duck 2016a). These tensions continued into 2016 when local political debate went public over the land ambulance 2016 budget (Duck 2016a; 2016b). These tensions may explain some of the GAT findings today, that cause EWEMS to suffer performance in accountability.

Overall, EWEMS's GAT score is average. It scores 15 points out of 18 (0.83) with the average total score for the 13 agreements being 0.836 (see table 4.1). The three points of

deduction mostly come from areas of internal governance, with partial deductions in accountability.

When completing the GAT for EWEMS, neither the CMSM agreement nor website data provided a schedule of meetings (question B2) between partner municipalities, leaving the business of land-ambulance to be discussed as needed, at Essex County Council meetings. This finding was not common, as most CMSM agreements and other services provided a mechanism for meetings, even if ad hoc, between municipalities. This finding does not provide a clear forum for elected officials in Windsor or Pelee Island to bring service concerns forward to the CMSM, leading to potentially uncomfortable or informal discussions.

The finding of scheduled meetings in combination with the lack of board or joint subcommittee (B5) may explain why tensions have historically been high between the municipalities. While the performance of the SPB was good in this regard, several other direct-delivery and contracted services have established a joint committee. These official committees with elected representatives are crucial at maintaining accountability. This is especially true for the citizens of non-CMSM municipalities, who need an opportunity to sanction local representatives. In the case of Essex-Windsor-Pelee Island, residents of Windsor and Pelee Island have no apparent mechanism in ensuring their elected officials have a regular voice on service provisions. If a member of the Public in Windsor is unhappy with their land-ambulance service, their ability to sanction officials is non-existent.

Finally, EWEMS loses partial marks for their general inquiry contact information and lack of identified complaints contact, as well as having limited information published within the Essex County annual report, rather than a stand-alone complete report. It should be noted

however that EWEMS is the only service to even go this far, besides the aforementioned MLEMSA.

Overall, EWEMS performs well across the GAT. What's more, the history of tensions between Windsor and Essex (Duck 2016a; 2016b), following a year-long negotiation and arbitration (Rice 1999) over CMSM agreements, could explain the findings of diminished cooperation between the municipalities. These challenges are not inconsistent with many city-county relationships, whose forced cooperation led to disagreements, tensions, and arbitrations (Spicer 2015; 2016). In sum, considering this local context, the findings of this study's GAT, and previous analysis of tensions resulting from inter-municipal agreements, the results look to be steady. EWEMS's performance in the GAT would be improved by;

- EWEMS publishing an independent annual report, and,
- EWEMS providing a clear contact and process for citizen complaints, and,
- The County of Essex establishing a joint land ambulance services committee.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the 1990s, Ontario underwent significant changes across the municipal landscape. With the election of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1995 under the promise to lower taxes (Ibbitson 1997), the 1990s were a very turbulent time for municipalities (Spicer 2016). Local governments faced elimination and amalgamation (Siegel 2005), as well as a realignment of service responsibilities (Graham and Phillips 1998). One of the products of this realignment was the introduction of the CMSM program in 1998, which saw local municipalities take on the delivery and partial funding for many services (Spicer 2015), including land-ambulance.

Very quickly 37 designated CMSMs along with 10 district social services boards were forced into inter-municipal services agreements (Spicer 2015). Previous research by Spicer has demonstrated that these forced partnerships led to tensions and even legal challenges (2015, 2016), particularly in city-county institutions. Spicer states that this was a failed assumption by the province that local governments would arrive at local solutions easily, even though city-county institutions, created by the Province (2016), have a limited history of voluntary cooperation (2015). Since the introduction of these agreements, research has been completed in further understanding the CMSM organization and history of city-county institutions in Ontario (Spicer 2015, 2016).

The complexity of city-county CMSM agreements, like many inter-local agreements, is further affected by the governance models established to deliver these services (Lyons and Spicer 2018). Special attention has been paid to the study of accountability in SPBs and other inter-municipal partnerships (Spicer 2017; Lyons and Spicer 2018; Lyons 2020).

As a result of the provincial realignment, Ontario has designated 55 CMSMs for land ambulance service. Many of the CMSM designations were easily established, because of single-tier, two-tier and regional organization (Spicer 2015). Further, with Indian Reserves and northern Ontario services boards, what remains is 13 city-county regions that were largely left to organize their own land-ambulance service agreements.

With such an important life-saving service (Aringhieri et al. 2017), what is equally important is the delivery of that service. As Boyne notes, the performance of service delivery has always been the subject and interest of scholars (2006). Critical to the calculus of performance is the governance model with which the service is delivered (Longeway 2020).

Therefore, decision-makers must consider the governance model when they look to ensure the performance of the services they are accountable for. And, when forced into inter-municipal cooperation and inter-local service delivery, it is important to recognize that these cooperative agreements inherently blur the lines of accountability (Lyons and Spicer 2018). What is left for elected officials forced into inter-local agreements, such as CMSMs, is to ensure that decisions they have authority over, are made with optimum democratic performance in mind.

In order for municipalities to obtain sufficient information to make an important decision around democratic performance, they must rely on the ongoing research of scholars into factors that improve said performance. As mentioned, studies within Ontario have measured accountability in inter-local agreements (Spicer 2017) and SPBs (Lyons and Spicer 2018). Further, much review has been conducted on the establishment of the CMSM program, city-county institutions, and their subsequent agreements (Spicer 2015, 2016).

Previous studies demonstrate that CMSM agreements and city-county institutions are unique partnerships found in Ontario. This, combined with the research on a governance model's effect on accountability and inter-local agreements, what is left is to provide further empirical data supporting the extent to which governance models in CMSM partnerships affect accountability.

In this study, the 13 land-ambulance services covering city-county institutions were analyzed using a modified Governance Assessment Tool (GAT), previously used within the Ontario context, to operationalize the performance of each ambulance service. The results of the GAT were used to draw conclusions on how city-county land-ambulance services perform overall and categorized into their governance models. As all governance models, direct and contract delivery, as well as SPB, are represented in the 13 city-county land ambulance service, this

allowed for a great opportunity to further study CMSM agreements, and the effect of governance models on accountability.

To bolster the findings of the GAT, two cases were selected to look at a real-life case comparison to determine if the GAT findings were consistent in two land-ambulance services within Ontario. Further, by purposefully selecting the most similar cases whose only distinct difference is their governance model, helps to strengthen previous studies' findings that governance models have an impact on accountability in the real world (Lyons and Spicer 2018).

This paper finds that while land-ambulance services generally perform far better than previous research (Spicer 2017), there is variation in accountability across the 13 land ambulance services studied. Further, when the results of the GAT criteria are explored using a brief case study comparing EWEMS and MLPS, the study finds that they are supported by real-case examples of the challenges associated with city-county separation and inter-local service agreements. Variation in performance is aligned with previous research (Spicer 2017; Lyons and Spicer 2018) into inter-municipal agreements with various governance structures. In addition to the above, observations noted in the case study, guided by GAT performance, provide objective governance mechanisms that can be introduced to improve accountability.

The variation in accountability looks to be correlated to the delivery model selected by the designated CMSM. Contracting the delivery of service appeared to be associated with poorer performance in the GAT. This was largely attributed to the public access to information. As many documents, such as the city-county CMSM agreement are available, the service contracts were not. This is not surprising, however, as the Municipal Act (Municipal Act SO 2001) permits these types of non-disclosure. Both direct delivery and SPB performed better on average than private delivery, however, SPB outperforms direct delivery in the GAT. This result of GAT

improvement with an SPB is consistent with previous literature (Spicer and Lyons 2018).

However, with the overall strong performance across all services, the individual criterion was explored. What is observed is that the formation of a joint committee, with the representation of elected officials from all parties involved in the agreement, appeared to be associated with strong overall GAT performance.

Other areas where performance generally missed the mark were the publication of an annual report and the creation of a specific and clear complaints process, separated from general inquiries through the service or municipality. Although not completed by many, those few that do satisfy this requirement, are ensuring that the public has access to sufficient information and a mechanism for sanctioning the service. Both of these elements are essential to a complete framework for accountability (Ebrahim and Weisband 2007).

While the SPB outperforms all other governance models, decision-makers may not be ready to commit to this change. This is often a result of the authority board make-up, where Lyons notes that board positions are often not directly elected, and are therefore a “step removed from the electoral process” (2020, pp. 151). Despite this shortcoming, an SPBs design, which is at an arms-length from the CMSM and with the commitment to one specific service (Sancton 2015; Lyons 2020), appears to correlate with strong performance across the GAT. This is likely due to this arm-length design, which lends itself to specific and separate avenues for communication, annual reporting, and inter-municipal board representation.

The overall strong performance of land-ambulance service should not be surprising. Land ambulance services are important, and expensive (Prno 2002). So it is not surprising that there is a strong degree of oversight. However, those partnerships that approach the CMSM with inclusive representation, despite their city-county separation, demonstrate improved

performance. Municipalities and land-ambulance services should look to ensure they establish land-ambulance joint committees that contain elected representation from every municipality within the CMSM partnership. Further, they should ensure that they satisfy the established frameworks for accountability, including providing the public with access to information and an avenue for sanctions. This can be accomplished by ensuring that annual reports are published and the ambulance service's website contains a complaints process.

Future studies should continue in this area, as the frequency of inter-local agreements continues to increase (Spicer 2017). While some challenge the authority of an SPB (Lyons 2020), on balance they appear to improve accountability performance in inter-municipal agreements. Accountability in our most vital services, such as land-ambulance is crucial. For services looking for an eloquent solution to improving accountability in CMSM program service delivery, the establishment of an SPB, similar to that of Middlesex County, enables improved performance to that of direct or contracted delivery.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – List of City-County Institutions

City-County Region	Municipalities (upper-tier and separated cities)
Simcoe County	City of Barrie City of Orillia County of Simcoe
Essex County	Windsor, Essex County Township of Pelee Island
Wellington County	Guelph County of Wellington
Middlesex County	London County of Middlesex
Frontenac County	Kingston County of Frontenac
Peterborough County	Peterborough Peterborough County
Renfrew County	Pembroke Renfrew County
The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville	City of Brockville Town of Gananoque Town of Prescott United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
Lanark County	Smith's Falls Lanark County
Elgin County	St. Thomas Elgin County
Hastings County	City of Belleville City of Quite West The County of Hastings
Perth County	Town of St. Mary's City of Stratford Perth County
Cornwall	Cornwall The United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

Appendix B – Table of CMSM Agreements

CMSM Region	CMSM Agreement/By-Law	Date
Simcoe County	BY-LAW No. 4871 BY-LAW No. 5770	November 2002, April 2009
Essex County	<i>Division of Costs Arbitration</i>	March 1999
Wellington County	<i>Municipal Service Management Agreement – March 2000</i>	March 2000
Middlesex County	BY-LAW No. 6353 – Creation of SPB Land Ambulance Services Cost Apportion Agreement	October 2011, January 2018
Frontenac County	<i>Municipal Service Management Agreement – August 2005</i> <i>Division of Costs Arbitration</i>	July 2004, November 2004, August 2005
Peterborough County	BY-LAW No. 50-2003 BY-LAW No. 50-1998 <i>Amendment to Appendix A of CMSM Agreement – Unknown date 2019</i>	May 1998, November 2003, No date 2019
Renfrew County	<i>Renfrew County and Pembroke Arbitration</i>	January 2001
The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville	BY-LAW No. 03-39 Joint Operating Agreement – May 2000	May 2000, July 2003
Lanark County	BY-LAW No. 8017-2006, and BY-LAW No. 2006-41, and BY-LAW No. 8101-2007	September 2000, October 2006, December 2007
Elgin County	<i>Consolidation Agreement Elgin/St. Thomas</i> <i>Consolidation Plan for The County of Elgin and</i> <i>City of St. Thomas</i>	April 1998
Hastings County	BY-LAW No. 99-60 <i>Municipal Service Management Agreement – March 2000</i> BY-LAW No. 00-75 BY-LAW No. 2006-70	September 1999, March 2000, June 2000, April 2006
Perth County	BY-LAW NO. 24-1998 BY-LAW No. 32-98 <i>Municipal Service Management Agreement – March 1998</i> <i>Amendment Municipal Service Management Agreement – January 2000</i> <i>Amendment Municipal Service Management Agreement – August 2003</i>	March 1998, January 2000, August 2003
Cornwall	BY-LAW No. 001-2002 BY-LAW No. 002-2002 BY-LAW No. 095-2002 <i>Municipal Service Management Agreement – No By-Law No.</i>	January 2002, June 2002, No date in 2020

Appendix C – Completed Modified Governance Assessment Tool

		Modified Governance Assessment Criteria			
Services	Number of Municipalities in Partnership	Public Access	Internal Governance	Accountability	Total Score
		Category score	Category score	Category Score	
Cornwall	2	0.8	1.0	0.786	0.86
Elgin	2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.53
Essex-Windsor	3	1.0	0.667	0.857	0.83
Frontenac-Kingston	2	1.0	0.667	0.786	0.81
Guelph-Wellington	2	0.8	0.833	0.857	0.83
Hastings	3	1.0	1.0	0.857	0.94
Lanark	2	0.9	1.0	0.714	0.81
Leeds & Grenville	4	0.8	1.0	0.571	0.77
Middlesex-London	2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Perth	3	0.7	1.0	0.786	0.83
Peterborough	2	1.0	1.0	0.857	0.94
Renfrew	2	1.0	1.0	0.786	0.92
Simcoe	3	1.0	1.0	0.857	0.89
Average Score		0.885	0.987	0.786	0.843
No colour represents direct delivery by the designated CMSM					
Blue represents some degree of contracted service delivery					
Orange represents delivery through SPB					