

Paramedic Services Update

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Report Summary

This report provides information regarding the recent business activities, relevant statistics and good news stories within the Paramedic Services Division, Community Safety Department.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan / Health Impact Assessment

This report refers to operational matters.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

This report aims to provide the City of Greater Sudbury Emergency Services Committee with an update on activities, relevant statistics, and recent performance measures within the Paramedic Services Division of the Community Safety Department.

Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services is responsible for the delivery of a performance-based paramedic service that complies with legislative and regulatory requirements, ensuring safe and quality pre-hospital emergency medical care and transportation for those individuals suffering injury or illness. A performance-based paramedic service focuses on clinical excellence, response time performance, patient outcomes, patient satisfaction, continuous quality improvement, and a healthy work environment conducive to professional growth.

COVID-19

Paramedic Services staffing levels have been minimally impacted by either emergency childcare issues or other COVID-19 related challenges. Deployment of staff for emergency response to service our community has not changed. During the early stages of the pandemic, call volume had decreased by approximately

20%, however, call volume has returned to previous volumes as seen in years previous. On January 14, 2021, a province wide stay-at-home order was implemented for 28 days. The stay-at-home order required staff to reevaluate those still performing work in the office and support transition to conduct work from home. After the 28 days, those who can work from home are continuing to do so, including managers and support staff.

COVID-19 Mobile Community Testing

Paramedic Services continues to provide support to the community to address the changing demands created by this pandemic. Paramedics continue to support the Health Sciences North (HSN) COVID-19 Assessment Centre by conducting mobile in home COVID-19 testing for select individuals unable to attend the Assessment Centre in person either due to limited mobility or transportation challenges. Currently Community Paramedics have assessed and tested over 6,094 symptomatic residents in the community allowing equitable access to COVID-19 testing. In addition, we continue to collaborate with community partners, conducting surveillance testing to address specific needs of declared outbreaks and vulnerable populations within our community.

Paramedic Operations

COVID-19 Employer Rapid Antigen Screening Pilot Program

Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services was accepted to participate in phase one of the employer voluntary antigen screening pilot led by the Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario, and Ontario Health. The objective of the pilot is to assess the value of the Panbio brand antigen test as a screening tool to support employee safety and business continuity in a variety of workplaces. Results of this pilot will support an increased understanding of how rapid antigen testing could be deployed more broadly to support provincial COVID-19 response activities.

In this pilot Paramedic staff are tested by Paramedic Services Training staff and Community Paramedics for COVID-19 prior to shift commencement up to three times per week. Results of the antigen test are provided within ten minutes following test completion. Panbio antigen tests are less sensitive than the PCR test. It is a test that has a 93.3% sensitivity and 99.4% specificity, whereas other studies have shown sensitivity results ranging from 72.1%-86.5%, which means testing could yield negative results in those who are infected 30% of the time. As of March 8, 2021, 657 antigen tests have been conducted and only 1 indicated a positive result. Following the positive result, the employee was immediately referred to the HSN COVID-19 Assessment Centre for additional testing. The HSN COVID-19 Assessment Centre testing confirmed that the employee was COVID-19 positive. The employee followed Public Health Sudbury and District (PHSD) protocols and has now been cleared by PHSD to return to work. Paramedics Services continues to participate in the antigen screening pilot, with a completion date of March 31, 2021.

Screening for COVID

The Ministry of Health (MOH) and Emergency Health Services Branch (EHSB) is responsible under the Ambulance Act for publishing standards for patient care, documentation, safety, equipment requirements and transportation. These requirements are outlined in various paramedic practice documents: Standards, Training Bulletins, Manuals and Guides. During this pandemic, the EHSB has been updating COVID-19 Screening Tools for paramedics and Ambulance Communication Officers (ACO) as new knowledge is discovered about COVID-19. The ACO performs the initial COVID-19 screening of all 911 calls. Paramedics are advised of the outcome from the ACO screening, and with this information paramedics then don the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required to protect themselves. Additional measures have been put in place to protect responding paramedics. These include instructions the ACO provides to the callers to not approach the paramedics when they arrive, instructions for all those present to wear a mask, and to follow responding paramedic's instructions to maintain distancing. On arrival, paramedics also complete a second screening. The outcome of this screening again further supports the decision of which level of PPE is to be used for patient care.

Mental Health Support

Paramedic Services recognizes the impact to all front-line workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Support mechanisms such as information and strategies on managing their mental wellness have been and will continue to be provided. Staff are routinely reminded to reach out to any member of the Peer Support Network (PSN) if they need additional support. Our PSN team continues to participate in professional development sessions with a local clinical psychologist. These sessions are instrumental in advancing the development of our PSN team, ensuring they are well prepared to assist their colleagues in times of need.

Recently, the Ministry of the Solicitor General (SolGen) reached out to the Ministry of Health (MOH) inviting Paramedic Services to participate in a mental health wellness program giving First Responders across the province access to the First Response Mental Health's (FRMH) PeerConnect app; a proactive peer support and wellness online tool.

The PeerConnect app will support existing programs we currently have in place such as wellness tools, self-assessments, mental health programming, and peer support programs while also allowing for easier access to our peer supporters.

This tool is an Ontario-based solution that is already in use among several emergency medical services and first responder agencies in Ontario and across North America. There is no cost to participate in this project for the first year, and have up to March 31, 2022 to use the app.

On March 10, 2021 Paramedic Services contacted PeerConnect, expressing our interest to implement this app into our Service to support all our mental wellness programs.

Hiring

During the early stages of the pandemic, college programs were impacted due to restrictions imposed by Public Health and many paramedic services across the Province anticipated potential staffing challenges. To help mitigate this issue, the Ministry of Health Emergency Health Regulatory and Accountability Branch (MOH-EHRAB) amended the regulations to allow the hiring of Emergency Medical Attendants, which addressed the potential challenges that were anticipated by paramedic services.

Paramedic Services reviewed current staffing levels and as a result, are currently in the process of recruiting regular part-time paramedics. During the hiring, orientation, and base hospital certification, Paramedic Services will be amending the processes to allow for physical distancing.

Expanded Ontario Naloxone Program

In December 2020, Sudbury Paramedic Services commenced participation in the Ontario Naloxone Program in collaboration with PHSD. This program has paramedics not only administering Naloxone as part of their standard paramedic care, but also distributing Naloxone kits to identified individuals where appropriate in the course of their duties or when requested from the public. This program permits 24/7 access to Naloxone in Sudbury, which was not previously available. This important initiative allows paramedics to promote harm reduction for those who misuse drugs with a goal of improving positive health outcomes in the community.

Since the implementation of this program on December 12, 2020, Paramedics have distributed 92 Naloxone kits and continue to support those in need.

Paramedic Services Performance Measures Defined

Paramedic Calls for Service

A measure of calls received by Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services by the Central Ambulance

Communications Centre (CACC) to respond to emergencies. In simpler terms, the number of calls to 911 for Paramedic Services that resulted in Paramedics being dispatched.

Paramedic Unit Responses

A measure of units dispatched by the CACC to paramedics to service emergencies. This number will typically be higher than calls for service as some calls necessitate the use of multiple ambulances, Paramedic Response Units, or Platoon Superintendent Units.

Paramedic Patients Transported

A measure of patients being transported on both an emergency and non-emergency basis (Table 1).

EMS Calls for Service	28,402
EMS Unit Response	34,314
EMS Patients Transported	19,855

Table 1. Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services Statistics January 1- December 31, 2020

Logistics

Personal Protective Equipment

During the COVID-19 pandemic, inventory levels of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are being monitored to ensure all staff have the proper equipment to work safely. The Logistics staff continue to coordinate the procurement of supplies to ensure PPE levels are maintained and available to meet current and potential increased demands.

Electric Vehicles

Recently the Ministry of Long Term Care announced that Greater Sudbury will be participating in the Community Paramedicine Long Term Care Program over the next three years to provide services to individuals who are waiting for placement in a long-term care home. The Community Paramedics in these roles will require transportation to conduct home visits within our community. It was identified that this program allows the opportunity to utilize Electric Vehicles (EVs) to provide transportation for the Community Paramedics. The introduction of EVs for this program aligns with the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) to reduce carbon emissions and pollution in Greater Sudbury. During the three year program the EV's will be evaluated for performance, maintenance, infrastructure, and costing. At the completion of the program an analysis of the EVs will be conducted to determine if EVs can be implemented within other operational areas of our fleet.

Currently an RFP has been established to lease four EVs required for the next three years for this program.

Professional Standards

Professional Standards is responsible for the delivery of quality assurance programming, consisting of clinical and service delivery auditing to improve patient safety and ensure high-quality clinical care, thereby reducing risks. Professional Standards also manages the electronic patient care record system, including quality assurance oversight. Clinical events are monitored and evaluated to identify training and education opportunities for the paramedics.

Reported number of clinical events: Date range is January 1 – December 31, 2020

Cardiac	Number of calls with at least 1, 12 Lead Acquired	3,733
	Total Cardiac Ischemia related	1,227
	Number of STEMI	106
	A STEMI is a specific type of heart attack, which can be diagnosed by Paramedics in the pre-hospital setting.	

Neurological	Total Neuro-related	2,073
	Number of Acute Stroke (FAST positive, timeline criteria met)	198
	Average Age in Years	72
	An Acute Stroke Patient qualifies for specific time-sensitive treatments from the hospital to reduce and reverse damage caused by stroke.	

Sepsis	Number of Identified Sepsis cases	167
	Average age in years	71
	A Suspected Sepsis Patient meets a specific criteria (qSOFA) used to identify patients at risk of death due to systemic infection.	

Cardiac Arrest Medical and Trauma	Total Cardiac Arrest, Medical and Traumatic	421
	Total Treated Cardiac Arrest Medical and Traumatic	199
	Number of Medical Arrest with Return of Spontaneous Circulation at any time while in Paramedic Care.	52

Training

Enhanced Training Sessions

During the pandemic, Paramedic Training Officers' schedules have been adjusted to provide additional training time with staff. Training staff address training needs 16 hours a day, Monday to Friday and deliver real time training and support to staff where needed with a specific focus on infection, prevention, and control. Paramedic Training Officers modified the delivery of training by conducting one-on-one sessions with paramedics. Topics of training included mask fit testing and reviewing all COVID-19 related practices and processes. The training officers continue to review COVID-19 safe work practices with all staff.

Care Transitions Community Paramedicine Program (CTCP)

The Care Transitions Community Paramedicine Program partners with Health Sciences North to utilize trained Community Paramedics (CP) to provide home visits and approved interventions under medical oversight to complex, high-risk patients to assist them in transitioning from acute care to community and/or self-supported in-home care.

The program's goal is to decrease emergency department visits and readmissions for identified high-risk patients with chronic disease (CHF, COPD, and diabetes) compared to their past utilization. Paramedics assigned to the CTCP continue to deliver services as outlined in the 2021 work plan during the pandemic.

From January 1, 2021 until March 8, 2021, there were 319 active patients enrolled within the program and only one patient reported the need to utilize our 911 service for the treatment of their chronic health condition. There was one referral to primary care and/or community service, thus improving the quality of life for this patient.

In an effort to reduce in person contacts during COVID-19, the CTCP increased the number of patient contacts over the phone. Home visits continued to be conducted to those that were deemed necessary or Just in Time (JIT). These JIT visits are for those situations of chronic illness exacerbation to allow CTCP paramedics to intervene prior to activation of 911 or an emergency department visit.

Visits Completed / JIT	326/28
Working Days	63
Active Patients	319
911 Calls Related to CTCP	1

Reporting date range is from January 1, 2021 – March 8, 2021

Health Promotion Community Paramedicine (HPCP)

The objective of this program is to maintain and expand health promotion, education, and injury prevention. This program will also assist citizens in chronic disease recognition and prevention, injury awareness/prevention strategies, referrals, and health system navigation assistance. The primary goals of this program are to mitigate emergency calls and hospital visits, keep our "at-risk" aged population healthy and at home. This is an attempt to aid our vulnerable populations and redirect them to more suitable community resources other than the Emergency Department.

During the pandemic, the HPCP program has collaborated with various community agencies in our provision of COVID-19 mobile testing to ensure our patients are tested and may remain safely in their place of residence.

- HSN COVID-19 Assessment Centre is screening phone calls from citizens to evaluate if COVID-19 testing should be conducted, scheduling in-home testing by the Community Paramedic Mobile Testing service for those in our community who are unable to physically attend the HSN COVID-19 Assessment Centre and are members of the mobile testing group who provide the in-home COVID-19 testing.
- We have established a priority referral process to HPCP from NELHIN / Maison McCulloch Hospice for those who are in the community who require COVID-19 testing for admission to either a Long-Term Care facility or hospice.
- A group of Primary Care Physicians may be utilized by phone to function as CP medical oversight physicians to offer guidance / follow-up if required for those patients the CPs test and assess and who are deemed to require further intervention.
- Sudbury and District Nurse Practitioner Clinic (SDNPC) with Dr. Alex Anawati and Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) have collaborated with HPCP where HPCPs provide on demand COVID-19 testing every morning at the Withdrawal Management at 336 Pine Street.

Since the program began on March 15, 2020, 6,094 tests have been performed by Community Paramedic Mobile Testing service.

We have continued with our paramedic referral programs and Community Mobilization Sudbury-Rapid Mobilization Table (CMS_RMT).

We have begun a gradual re-entry into CP clinics, utilizing virtual technology and less in-person contact. This program is another McMaster development in concert with Ontario Health. Preparation for this new version of CP@Clinic began in February 2021 with a start date of February 28, 2021. Staff took part in Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) training to utilize video technology in addition to telephone consultation.

New Community Paramedicine Programs

Ontario Health North Remote Clinical Monitoring Pilot

Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services has been awarded \$142,000 in funding that the Ministry of Health has approved in dedicated short-term allotments to support provincial and regional initiatives that provide COVID-19 patients with remote clinical care and monitoring in the community. The objective of this funding is to ensure COVID-19 patients and other vulnerable patients receive appropriate clinical care and monitoring in the community, including escalation to a medical assessment or acute care where necessary. By supporting remote clinical care models, this funding is also intended to reduce the risk of infection among health care workers. Paramedic Services has collaborated with three other paramedic services and health care agencies in the northeast and designed a program which will be delivered as a regional model. Paramedic Services commenced a five-month pilot program, staffed with one Community Paramedic 12 hours per day in December who have enrolled 26 COVID-19 positive patients in the remote patient monitoring service in our community to date.

This program has helped to support 46 discharged patients and continues to support 12 COVID-19 positive patients in their homes and 19 others who suffer from chronic health conditions. The benefits to the above are medical oversight, the comfort that someone is keeping an eye on patients' wellbeing with phone consultations and daily visits, and reduced exposures for both patients and the community.

Ministry of Health - Home and Community Care High Intensity Supports Program and Community Paramedic Expansion

Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services has been awarded \$189,000 through the Ministry of Health's initiatives to expand Home and Community Care and Community Paramedicine for the purpose of providing support to regional health partners to implement plans and execute the High Intensity Supports at Home Program and expand Community Paramedicine to support the health system response to the COVID-19 pandemic and seasonal influenza. Home and community care can help address reduced bedded capacity by assuming care responsibility for hospital Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients with a long-term care (LTC) destination and other patients with similar needs on LTC waitlists. This will ensure high needs patients continue to receive care when beds are in short supply. Paramedicine can be leveraged as 'capacity enhancers' to work alongside home and community care and other services. Target populations are clients requiring supplemental Community Paramedic services, beyond home and community care or seniors with similar needs in the community at high risk of hospital admission and becoming designated ALC (i.e., those with frequent hospital admissions, emergency department visits, and those recently discharged at high risk of readmission).

From January 1, 2021 to March 8, 2021 our High Intensity Community Paramedics have enrolled a total of 26 patients resulting in 27 home visits, 55 telephone consultations, 7 physician consultations totaling 89 interactions.

Community Paramedicine - Long Term Care

Greater Sudbury submitted a proposal for \$2 million per year for the next three years to the Ministry of Long Term Care for participation in the CP Long Term Care Program. The Ministry of Long-Term Care is funding the Community Paramedicine Program to provide services to individuals who are waiting for placement in a long-term care home or who are soon to be eligible for long-term care. This initiative is part of the Province's modernization plan to address systemic barriers in long-term care bed development and the growing demand for long-term care.

The purpose of the program is to keep individuals who are on the long-term care wait list, or who are soon to be eligible for long-term care, stabilized in their illness trajectory and in their own home for as long as possible. The program will do this through preventive and responsive care, such as home visits and remote patient monitoring.

Our proposal could see four additional Community Paramedics per day in the community providing 24/7 access to Community Paramedicine services for defined non-emergency procedures in individual's own homes addressing urgent, episodic care needs.

To date, we have been approved for this project, have hired a Clinical Lead, and seconded a Project Planner from the City to help with implementation of this program.