

Paramedic Services Update – June 2021

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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 and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)

This report refers to operational matters and has direct connection with Goal #9 of the Community Energy and Emissions Plan, “Electrify 100% of Transit and City fleet by 2035”.

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

Both emergency childcare issues and other COVID-19 related challenges have minimally affected Paramedic Services staffing levels. 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 since returned to pre-COVID levels. On May 13, 2021, the province wide stay-at-home order was extended until June 2, 2021. Currently, staff that are able to conduct work from home are continuing to do so, including managers and support staff.

Paramedic Operations

Provincial Hospital Surge Support with Interfacility COVID-19 Transfers

As hospitals throughout Southern Ontario experienced an increased demand for critical care beds to accommodate COVID-19 admissions to Intensive Care Units (ICU), Health Sciences North (HSN) stepped forward to be a part of the provincial critical care effort by accepting COVID positive Intensive Care patients from hospitals in Southern Ontario to HSN.

In collaboration with HSN, Paramedic Services provided the transportation and additional medical support to complete the transfers. As of May 5, Paramedic Services had transported six COVID-19 patients from hospitals in Southern Ontario to HSN. At this time, there are no transfers booked, but we are available to assist HSN, when requested.

Employer Provincial COVID-19 Antigen Screening 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 was to assess the value of rapid antigen testing utilizing the Abbott Panbio brand antigen test as a screening tool to support employee safety and business continuity in a variety of workplaces. Results of this pilot provided an increased understanding of how rapid antigen testing could be deployed more broadly to support provincial COVID-19 response activities.

During this pilot, paramedic staff were voluntarily tested for COVID-19 prior to shift commencement up to three times per week or when indicated. Results of the antigen test are provided within fifteen minutes following test completion. Abbott Panbio antigen tests are less sensitive than the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and as a result a regular lab tested PCR test is required to confirm positivity. The pilot was conducted over an eight-week period and was completed on March 31, 2021.

Following the Abbott Panbio Antigen Screening Pilot, the employer Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP), was launched. The PASP is a voluntary longer-term project providing employers in priority settings to add an additional safety measure in high-risk and essential workplaces to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. We commenced with PASP on April 6, 2021 and continue with our routine COVID-19 pre-shift screening practice. This project will continue until March 31, 2022, when the agreement expires with the Ministry of Health.

As of May 10, 2021, a combined 956 Abbott Panbio and PASP tests have been conducted identifying two antigen positive asymptomatic employees. These positive antigen results were followed by referral to the COVID-19 Assessment Centre for PCR testing. The Assessment Centre testing confirmed that the two employees were COVID-19 positive. The employees followed Public Health Sudbury and District (PHSD) protocols and have since been cleared by PHSD to return to work.

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 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 tools 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 require 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, providing 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 24/7.

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 Paramedic Services to participate in this project for the first year, and first responders have up to March 31, 2022 to use the app.

With the implementation of this PeerConnect app our goal is to provide communication and support for every Community Safety member, working towards the ultimate goal of a safe and supported work environment. PeerConnect is designed to increase access to mental health services and provide the resources we need to take care of our members. The app ensures member privacy, security of information, and organization controlled permissions.

We are committed to building a culture of care and support for all members within Community Safety. We understand the stresses and challenges faced by our staff, and we want to ensure that they have access to the people and tools they require in order to live fulfilled connected lives. We now have the tools to support our most valuable asset, our members. The anticipated date to launch the PeerConnect App is mid-June 2021.

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, recruited 22 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 126 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	9,572
EMS Unit Response	11,533
EMS Patients Transported	6,833

Table 1. Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services Statistics January 1- April 30, 2021

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 (CPLTC) 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. Four Tesla Model 3s have been purchased and we anticipate the shipment to arrive by the end of May.

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 EVs 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.

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 and quality assurance. 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 – April 30, 2021

Cardiac	Number of calls with at least 1, 12 Lead Acquired	1,453
	Total Cardiac related	487
	Number of STEMI	31
	A STEMI is a specific type of heart attack, which can be diagnosed by Paramedics in the pre-hospital setting.	

Neurological	Total Neuro-related	807
	Number of Acute Stroke (FAST positive, timeline criteria met)	80
	Average Age in Years	70
	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	50
	Average age in years	73
	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	133
	Total Treated Cardiac Arrest Medical and Traumatic	63
	Number of Medical Arrest with Return of Spontaneous Circulation at any time while in Paramedic Care.	11

Training

Enhanced Training Sessions

During the pandemic, Paramedic Training Officers' (PTO's) schedules have been adjusted to provide additional training time with staff. PTO's 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. PTO's modified the delivery of training by conducting one-on-one sessions with paramedics. Topics of training included mask fit testing and reviewing of all COVID-19 related practices and processes. The PTO's continue to review COVID-19 safe work practices with all staff as they assist in the maintenance of keeping these practices and procedures in line with the most current standards. The Training Section has been involved in facilitating the latest hiring process which commenced this past March and will be transitioning into the new hire orientation phase in late May.

The PTO's have also been working with Community Paramedic (CP) Program in collaboration with an outside agency to provide various levels of training available to the quickly expanding CP Program and its newest staff.

Spring training will be delivered following strong safety protocols with some delivery face to face, however as the Province wide Stay-at Home order remains in effect, the majority of the training will be delivered virtually. This spring training session will see all frontline paramedics receiving online fundamental Community Paramedic Training. Paramedics will also be receiving the Stop the Bleed program designed to further enhance the Paramedics ability to manage bleeding emergencies.