

## **Paramedic Services - Tactical Paramedic Program Update – December 2021**

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### **Report Summary**

This report provides information regarding the development and implementation of the Tactical Paramedic Program.

### **Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)**

This report refers to operational matters and has no direct connection to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

### **Background**

During the 2020 budget process, the business case for a Tactical Paramedic Program was approved by Council. Within the Business Case, Paramedic Services indicated that there continues to be an increase in the number of requests by Greater Sudbury Police Service (GSPS) to attend scenes that are high risk in nature. Within the Coroner Inquest reports from OC Transpo 1999, and Ipperwash 2007, both made recommendations for specialized medical support during significant police incidents. In today's environment, police officers are presented with more high-risk situations involving guns and weapons. Historically, paramedic staff had no specific training or specialized protective equipment to operate within a tactical environment despite being required to respond to these types of calls. The health and safety of all our staff is paramount. Paramedic Services recognized the importance of having properly trained paramedics to ensure we are reducing risk for Paramedic Services while meeting the medical needs of Police Services and citizens when responding to significant high-risk events.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Paramedic Services was able to continue to work towards the implementation of this program. Team member selection and initial training was completed. The specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) to allow Tactical Paramedics to work alongside the Police Services Emergency Response Unit (GSPS ERU) was ordered, but delivery was delayed due to the high demand of PPE during the pandemic. The specialized PPE arrived in the first quarter of 2021, and the Tactical Paramedic Program was launched in January of 2021.

## **Ongoing Training & Equipment**

In the first 10 months of deployment, the team has learned many invaluable lessons. By collaborating with ERU members, the Tactical Paramedics were provided with the opportunity to enhance their tactics, establish a working relationship with the ERU members, and learn new equipment and techniques, adding to their skill set.

Every member of the Tactical Paramedic Team have skills that they have learned from courses and share with other members to enhance their knowledge. Tactical Paramedic, Chris Gilbert, was recently certified by the International Board of Specialty Certification which covers advanced cardiac life support, international and pre-hospital trauma life support, tactical combat and emergency casualty care. Our goal within the next few years is to have our Tactical Paramedics accredited. Currently Ottawa Tactical Paramedics are the only team in Canada accredited.

Below is a list of future equipment and initiatives that the Tactical Paramedic Team is currently reviewing to enhance their learning and provide additional support for the GSPS ERU:

- Night vision goggles to actively be part of low/no lights activations
- Self-defense course
- K9 kit and Tactical Combat Casualty Care training to support our 2 GSPS Canine officers
- BICO (cold training and survival)
- Regularly on shift scheduled training with GSPS ERU
- Public Order Unit training
- Tactical Paramedic Accreditation in Canada

In early May and late September of 2021, all members of the Tactical Paramedic Program participated with GSPS ERU in their mandatory spring/fall training. Tactical Paramedics attended two of the four training sessions which afforded the opportunity for the Sudbury Tactical Paramedics and the GSPS ERU members to continue to collaborate and establish roles and responsibilities when working critical incidents together. Feedback from Inspector Despatie and Inspector Brunette from GSPS expressed how well the Tactical Paramedics worked with the GSPS ERU during training sessions.

Tactical Paramedics continue to learn and hone their skills by being placed in stressful situations/scenarios such as multiple casualties, low light, distracting injuries, officer down, and many other situations. In addition, Tactical Paramedics are encouraged to participate with the GSPS ERU members bi-monthly during their training sessions when feasible. These training days are more challenging to attend due to Tactical Paramedics being in regular deployment (paired with another paramedic) responding to 911 calls throughout their 12-hour shift, but every effort is made to attend.

On an annual basis, each Tactical Paramedic is required to successfully complete the physical fitness circuit that was established during the initial hiring phase. In 2021, the first year after the hiring process, all Tactical Paramedics passed their physical examination and improved their circuit time from their initial intake.

## **Personal Protective Equipment**

To ensure the health and safety of the Tactical Paramedics while working in high-risk operational environments alongside the GSPS ERU, specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) has been issued to each member. The specialized PPE includes a ballistic helmet, a ballistic vest, and a fire resistant (no melt/no drip) uniform. The PPE was ordered during the early stages of the selection process of this program, however, as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the manufacturer running a production only twice a year, the delivery of our PPE shipment was delayed. To assist the launch, the GSPS ERU provided plate carriers (bullet proof vests without armor) and ballistic helmets in the interim until the necessary equipment was delivered. In addition, Ottawa Paramedic Services' Special Operations Tactical Unit loaned bullet proof (ballistic) plates to allow our team to become operational and launch in January of 2021. These gestures were greatly appreciated by our team and allowed us to make further connections with other

specialized teams around the Province. We received our last pieces of specialized PPE from our supplier in the third quarter of 2021. Our team is now fully equipped with individual assigned PPE as per the standard.

## **Media Launch**

On August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, Greater Sudbury Police ERU and Paramedic Services' Tactical Paramedics were officially presented to the community of Greater Sudbury through various media outlets. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the official media launch had been re-scheduled three times. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, the Tactical Paramedic Team had the opportunity to introduce the team to the citizens of Greater Sudbury. This demonstration allowed the team to exhibit their skills in a scenario setting with the GSPS ERU. Corporate Communications staff from both GSPS and CGS collaborated together to make this day a great success.

## **Conclusion**

The Paramedic Services' Tactical Paramedic Program has been in place and highly functioning since January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021. To date, the team has participated in approximately 70 activations with the Greater Sudbury Police ERU and continues to evolve and learn with every event. The nine Tactical Paramedics have actively participated in ongoing and new training and are eager to further expand their scope with training and equipment. The remaining specialized PPE for the Tactical Paramedics has arrived, and we thank all our partners for assisting us in ensuring we are effective and tactically ready for any event that may arise.