

Advanced Care Paramedic Training Project

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Emergency Services
Committee

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Report Summary

This report provides information regarding possible solutions to address the current challenges in maintaining Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) staffing, including partnerships with educational institutions, enhanced internal training programs, and potential funding opportunities.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans

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

Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services delivers both a Primary Care as well as an Advanced Care Paramedic level of care. Our staffing compliment consists of 52 full time and 6 part time ACPs, and 54 full time and 48 part time Primary Care Paramedics, 23 of which are in temporary full-time contracts. ACPs possess specialized training and skills beyond the PCP level. ACPs are strategically stationed around the City of Greater Sudbury in 13 emergency services stations to ensure the service can maintain balanced emergency ACP response across the entire City for all high acuity mandatory ACP response call types such as, sudden cardiac arrest, seizures, choking, respiratory and cardiac distress or failure, and major trauma. ACPs require an additional year of education and are equipped to provide an advanced level of prehospital care, making them critical in managing complex and life-threatening medical emergencies.

Northern Ontario faces a significant Health Human Resources (HHR) challenge, including in the paramedic sector, due to factors such as workforce shortages, geographic barriers, and difficulty attracting and retaining professionals in remote and rural areas. Greater Sudbury Paramedic Service actively monitors its staffing levels to ensure adequate coverage and service delivery, implementing strategies to address vacancies and maintain high-quality prehospital care despite these regional pressures. There has been 21 ACPs resign over the last 5 years. Through exit interviews we determined these resignations were due to staff leaving to work closer to home, leaving to work for other emergency service, retirement, left the profession altogether or

due to long term disability. It is important to note that in 2024 nine ACPs resigned and this is mainly attributed to Ornge's large Sudbury base expansion and one of our neighboring Paramedic Services ACP staffing level expansion.

ACP and PCP Scope of Practice

Scope of Practice	PCP	ACP (which includes all PCP)
Airway management	Basic adjunct (OPA, NPA, bag-valve mask (BVM) suctioning, CPAP	Advanced airway management including intubation and supraglottic airways
Cardiac Care	AED use, recognition of basic cardiac rhythms (e.g., VF, VT)	Advanced ECG interpretation, manual defibrillation, pacing, cardioversion
Medication Administration	Limited to specific medications (e.g., ASA, nitroglycerin, salbutamol, epinephrine for anaphylaxis)	Broad range including sedatives (e.g., midazolam), opioids (e.g., morphine), antiarrhythmics, dopamine
Pain Management	Acetaminophen, NSAIDs	Advanced pain management with opioids (e.g., fentanyl) and other agents
IV Therapy	Peripheral IV initiation, basic fluid administration	Advanced IV therapy
Procedures	Spinal immobilization, basic wound care	Advanced interventions such as thoracostomy
Pediatric Care	Basic pediatric assessments and interventions	Advanced pediatric interventions, including complex airway and medication protocols
Trauma Care	Basic stabilization, splinting	Advanced trauma care, including chest decompression
Autonomy	Operates under standardized medical directives	Increased autonomy with protocol deviations allowed under certain conditions

Key Aspects of the Advanced Care Paramedic Scope of Practice:

- Enhanced Clinical Interventions:**
 ACPs perform advanced procedures such as endotracheal intubation, cardiac pacing, synchronized cardioversion, and advanced intravenous medication administration. These skills are vital in critical situations such as cardiac arrests, severe trauma, and acute medical crises.
- Expanded Scope of Practice:**
 ACPs are trained to interpret advanced diagnostic tools, including 12-lead electrocardiograms (ECGs), and make independent clinical decisions that align with protocols and patient needs.
- Improved Patient Outcomes:**
 The ability of ACPs to deliver timely, advanced interventions can significantly improve survival rates and reduce complications during emergencies.
- Comprehensive Emergency Response:**
 Advanced Care Services provide a higher level of care that is especially crucial in areas with limited access to immediate hospital resources, ensuring continuity of advanced care from the field to the hospital.
- Training and Mentorship:**
 ACPs contribute to the professional development of their teams by mentoring PCPs and supporting continuous quality improvement within the service.

Paramedic services like Greater Sudbury, which operate as a fully Advanced Care Service, set a high standard for prehospital care and demonstrate leadership in providing comprehensive, life-saving interventions for their communities. Moreover, having ACPs is essential for the sustainability and

competitiveness of our paramedic service. Greater Sudbury stands out as the only fully ACP service in the Northeast, making it a desirable employer for highly skilled paramedics. This distinction not only supports recruitment efforts, but also helps attract top talent to the region, ensuring the continued delivery of high-quality care. Maintaining a robust ACP workforce is therefore vital for meeting community needs and preserving our service's reputation as a leader in advanced prehospital care in Northeastern Ontario.

In Ontario, becoming a Primary Care Paramedic and subsequently an Advanced Care Paramedic involves a structured education and certification process. The process currently includes the following steps:

- Completion of a two-year diploma program at a recognized college in Ontario, followed by successfully completing the Advanced Emergency Medical Care Assistant exam administered by the Ministry of Health. This certification confirms that you meet the provincial standard to practice as a PCP after becoming hired by a paramedic service and completing Base Hospital certification. Experience working as a PCP is invaluable and often required before advancing to ACP training.
- Completion of a one-year Advanced Care Paramedic Certificate Program in an accredited ACP program at a recognized college, followed by successfully completing the provincial Advanced Care Paramedic Exam administered by the Ministry of Health. After becoming hired by a paramedic service they must gain authorization from a Base Hospital in order to demonstrate competency in advanced procedures under the supervision of a medical director.

Since 2001-2002 Cambrian College has been the sole provider of ACP training in the Northeast region, playing a critical role in equipping paramedics with the advanced skills required to serve the residents of Greater Sudbury. Over the years, this program has been instrumental in maintaining our ACP staffing levels, producing high-quality ACP graduates.

However, with the recent cancellation of Cambrian College's ACP program in August of 2024, the region faces a significant gap in local training opportunities. Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services has been strongly advocating for Cambrian College to reinstate the ACP program, however their focus remains on the implementation of the 3-year PCP Program. The loss of this vital paramedic development program poses challenges to our ability to recruit and retain ACPs, particularly given the geographic and logistical barriers for paramedics in the Northeast to access alternate training programs. As a result, it is imperative to explore alternate solutions to ensure we can continue to meet staffing requirements and uphold the standards of care expected from our Paramedic Service.

To address the Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) training crisis resulting from Cambrian College's program cancellation, Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services (GSPS) can consider two primary solutions; developing an internal ACP training program or partnering with a local educational institution. Both approaches offer viable pathways to ensure a steady pipeline of trained ACPs while addressing regional challenges.

1. Developing an Internal ACP Training Program

Creating an in-house ACP training program similar to York and Toronto Paramedic Services, would allow GSPS to take control of the training process and tailor it to the specific needs of the community and the service.

Advantages

- **Customized Curriculum and Delivery Model:**
Training can begin at any time at the discretion of the Paramedic Service and be designed to align with the operational realities and clinical demands of paramedics in Sudbury and the Northeast.
- **Enhanced Recruitment and Retention:**
Internal training provides a clear path to professional development and could be a positive step towards staff retention among employees, through a tuition reimbursement agreement making them more likely to remain with the service.

- **Quality:**
Improved quality of education by leveraging internal qualified staff to design and deliver a program tailored to local needs. Hosting the program internally fosters hands-on mentorship, consistent training standards, and a cohesive learning environment that reflects the service's operational values and expectations.

Implementation Steps

- **Accreditation:**
Work with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and Base Hospital programs to develop an accredited curriculum that meets provincial standards.
- **Faculty and Resources:**
Identify experienced ACPs or external educators to serve as instructors and invest in necessary simulation and training equipment.
- **Clinical Placements:**
Leverage partnerships with local hospitals and within GSPS for practical training opportunities.
- **Pilot Program:**
Start with a small cohort to assess feasibility, refine processes, and ensure compliance with provincial and Base Hospital guidelines.
- **Secure Funding:**
Seek provincial or federal funding for program development and ongoing support.

Challenges

- Initial costs for program development, faculty, and resource procurement.
- Maintaining a clear separation between operations and training, as resource demands, which could create competing priorities that impact the effectiveness of both service delivery and educational outcomes.
- Administrative workload to meet accreditation and regulatory requirements.

2. Partnering with a Local College

Collaborating with a local college offers a cost-effective and sustainable alternative to developing a program internally while maintaining high educational standards.

Advantages

- **Established Educational Expertise:**
Colleges have the infrastructure, resources, and faculty experience needed for ACP training.
- **Shared Costs:**
The partnership can reduce the financial burden on GSPS by sharing costs for facilities, instructors, and program accreditation.
- **Broader Reach:**
A college partnership could attract students from across the Northeast, increasing the pool of potential ACPs in the region.

Implementation Steps

- **Engage Local Colleges:**
Work with Cambrian College or Collège Boréal to gauge interest and feasibility in hosting an ACP program.
- **Joint Program Development:**
Collaborate on creating a curriculum tailored to Sudbury's needs while meeting provincial ACP standards.

- **Incorporate GSPS Instructors:**
Involve GSPS paramedics as guest lecturers or clinical mentors to provide real-world insights.
- **Secure Funding:**
Seek provincial or federal funding for program development and ongoing support.

Challenges

- Finding a college willing to implement such a program quickly to ensure training commencement by fall 2025.
- Time required to establish agreements and develop the curriculum.
- Dependence on the partner institution for long-term program sustainability.

Staff continue to evaluate these options and will return to Council in the first quarter of 2025 with a comprehensive report that provides more detail about potential options for addressing the Advanced Care Paramedic training challenges, including detailed strategies and their feasibility. This report will also explore any available funding opportunities to support the development and implementation of sustainable solutions for maintaining our ACP staffing levels and ensuring the delivery of high-quality paramedic services in Greater Sudbury.