

Advanced Care Paramedic Training for Paramedic Services

Presented To: Community and
Emergency Services
Committee

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Type: Managers' Reports

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Recommended by: General Manager of
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Report Summary

This report provides a recommendation regarding strategies to support the Paramedic Services Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) staffing levels and provides strategic short and long-term recommendations, which includes supporting employee ACP tuition.

Resolution

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury directs staff to develop a business case for the 2026-2027 budget cycle to approve an annual allocation of \$90,000 to establish an annual tuition reimbursement program to support up to six paramedics to enroll in an approved ACP training program;

AND THAT the program guidelines be developed by Paramedic Services to ensure accountability and equitable access to this training as outlined in the report entitled "Advanced Care Paramedic Training for Paramedic Services", from the General Manager of Community Safety, presented at the Community and Emergency Services Committee meeting on February 10, 2025.

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

This report refers to operational matters with no relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans.

Financial Implications

There are currently no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

Greater Sudbury is heavily invested in continuing to provide the highest level of prehospital care to the residents of Greater Sudbury. The ACP level of care allows our service to provide enhanced pre-hospital clinical interventions through an expanded scope of practice which can significantly improve survival rates and reduce complications during emergencies. Advanced Care Paramedics provide a higher level of care than Primary Care Paramedics (PCP), ensuring continuity of advanced care from the field to the hospital. In

addition, many of Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services specialty services and teams such as the Paramedic Training Section, Community Paramedicine, and Tactical Paramedicine depend on the ACP scope of practice. Without an adequate ACP staffing level, the sustainability of these projects is also at risk. ACPs also contribute to the professional development of their teams by mentoring PCPs and supporting continuous quality improvement within the service. Currently, we have 52 ACP positions with 2 ACP vacancies with an anticipated ACP work force shortage of 10% ACPs annually. In order to maintain adequate emergency coverage and service delivery, we need to continue to fill ACP vacancies annually of at least six per year.

The City of Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services has a longstanding history of collaboration with Cambrian College in delivering the Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) program. This partnership has focused on enhancing the skills and qualifications of paramedics through a tailored training program aligned with the service’s staffing needs. Employees attended training full time while working full time, and over time, employees have also attended ACP training programs at other colleges who offer a program delivery model which is compressed to minimize their on-campus commitment and still is completed in one (1) year, in line with the other colleges.

Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services had previously offered tuition support of up to \$10,000 for eligible employees who have completed their ACP training commencing in 2002. The service ceased this level of funding in 2020 as we had sufficient ACPs on staff at the time. Since then, we have used the CGS tuition reimbursement program to support ACP training of up to \$1,750 per person per year. Table 1 outlines the approved budget and training reimbursements for various paramedic training and professional development programs we have provided over the past five (5) years. With a current operating budget of only \$10,000 the service has insufficient funding to cover the approximate \$15,000 per person in ACP program tuition costs.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Training Reimbursement	\$18,634	\$14,521	\$6,549	\$3,710	\$8,387	\$12,837
Annual Operating Training Budget	\$3,060	\$3,060	\$3,060	\$3,060	\$10,000	\$10,000

Table 1

Investing in training employees to the ACP level directly reduces a significant barrier to professional development by alleviating the financial burden of education. Many paramedics may hesitate to pursue ACP certification due to the high cost of tuition and associated expenses, despite their interest in advancing their careers. By covering or subsidizing these costs, the service removes this barrier, empowering employees to focus on their studies and skill development. This not only enhances individual career satisfaction but also builds a more capable and committed workforce, benefiting the service and the community through improved patient care.

The Ontario Learn and Stay grant, which currently covers tuition for PCP training, does not currently cover ACP training. The Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs is advocating for ACP training to be included. This expansion would further reduce the cost burden and would support paramedics seeking to advance their skills. Advocacy efforts are actively underway at the ministry level, with various stakeholders and partners emphasizing the importance of this initiative to remove financial barriers, enhance career progression opportunities, and address the increasing demand for ACPs across Ontario.

Being an Advanced Care Paramedic service significantly enhances our ability to attract and retain top talent, particularly during a time of heightened health human resources (HHR) pressures. Offering ACP-level development opportunities demonstrates our commitment to professional growth and career advancement, making our service more appealing to both new recruits and experienced paramedics seeking to enhance their skills. Additionally, fostering a workplace that values advanced clinical practice boosts job satisfaction, promotes loyalty, and reduces turnover. This proactive investment in workforce development not only strengthens our recruitment efforts, but also ensures we remain competitive and capable of meeting the growing healthcare demands of our community.

In a report to Committee in December 2024, *Advanced Care Paramedic Training Project*, staff committed to returning to Committee with options for addressing the ACP training challenges and with recommendations to support the development and potential implementation of sustainable solutions for maintaining our ACP staffing levels.

The delivery and shortage of ACP program options remain a critical challenge within the education sector in the north, directly impacting the ability of paramedic services to address workforce needs. While the responsibility for program availability lies with educational institutions, our paramedic service recognizes the need to advocate for and support solutions that align with our staffing requirements.

Our paramedic service has proactively engaged with key stakeholders, including colleges, Workforce Planning, an organization funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, and Ontario Health which oversees the Northern Ontario Human Health Resources Secretariat, to discuss training options and funding opportunities for ACP education.

College Updates

College Boreal's Dean of Health Sciences reports they are seeking to collaborate with Confederation College to offer an ACP program here in Sudbury to be offered under Continuing Education, with a potential bilingual version starting in September 2025. Confederation has Ministry of Health (MOH) preliminary support, pending submission of accreditation documents, and market study. Confederation has already taken steps with the accreditation body to add a new site. Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services is being asked for support to subsidize 6 enrollments for the program with similar requests being made to surrounding paramedic services.

Georgian College's Dean of Health Sciences reports they offer a compressed fully accredited ACP program with a planned September 2025 intake at their Barrie campus. Georgian offers a program with no minimum intake from Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services. ACP graduates complete the compressed program while working and graduate in one year to write the ACP provincial exam, in line with other colleges.

Cambrian College's Dean of Health Sciences reports there are no plans to reinstate the ACP program currently and it is still being reviewed internally.

Following discussions with all key stakeholders, two potential options have emerged. Below are challenges and opportunities for both proposed options which inform a recommendation and next steps.

Option 1: Support a college to assist in ACP program reinstatement or initiation

Opportunities

- **Leverage Existing Expertise:** Colleges have established structures, accreditations, and faculty with experience in paramedic education.
- **Lower Financial Burden:** Reduced direct costs for our service, with funding focused on support rather than program development.
- **Broader Recruitment Pool:** Programs attract a diverse group of students, potentially increasing the overall ACP workforce in the region.
- **Flexibility:** Allows our service to focus resources on operational priorities rather than education administration.
- **Funding:** Assess the opportunity to submit a funding request to Ontario Health under the Northern Ontario Human Health Resources Secretariat for costs associated with supporting a college's ACP program accreditation, curriculum development, and tuition costs.

Challenges

- **Limited Control:** Curriculum and training may not fully align with our specific operational needs.
- **Dependence on External Partner:** Success relies on the college's ability to deliver a high-quality program annually with sustained accreditation.
- **Accessibility for Staff:** Program needs to be available in both official languages. Current PCPs may face logistical or financial barriers to attending college programs.
- **Program Uncertainty:** Restarting or initiating a program may involve delays or unexpected hurdles and may depend on a limited enrollment each year to continue.

Long-Term Considerations

- Collaboration with a college may enhance regional partnerships and elevate the broader paramedic profession.
- College programs provide a steady pipeline of ACPs, benefiting multiple services.

Option 2: Develop an accredited and Ministry of Health approved ACP training program within Paramedic Services

Opportunities

- **Tailored Curriculum:** Ability to customize training to meet the specific needs of our service and community.
- **Operational Alignment:** Ensures alignment with organizational protocols, equipment, and cultural values.
- **Increased Accessibility:** Reduces barriers for current PCPs within the service to upskill. Training could be offered to external applicants who have a desire for such training.
- **Retention Benefits:** Creates a sense of investment and loyalty among staff who receive training, assisting with both recruitment and retention of paramedics.
- **Funding:** The opportunity to submit a funding request to Ontario Health under the Northern Ontario Human Health Resources Secretariat for financial support of program start up exists.

Challenges

- **Significant Start-Up Costs:** High initial investment required for program development, facilities, equipment, and staffing.
- **Accreditation Requirements:** Time-consuming and complex process to achieve provincial accreditation.
- **Sustainability:** Ongoing costs for maintaining program quality and compliance with changing standards.

Long-Term Considerations

- Greater control in overall program content, quality, and delivery with no reliance on a minimum number of applicants, and courses can be run at the services discretion to satisfy staffing levels.
- Potential to establish the service as a regional leader in ACP training and some cost recovery through training external applicants..

Comparative Summary

Criteria	Internal Program	College Partnership
Cost	High initial and ongoing costs	Lower direct costs
Control	High control over curriculum	Limited control
Implementation Speed	Slower due to accreditation	Potentially faster if college is prepared
Staff Accessibility	High accessibility for internal staff	May involve barriers for staff
Regional Impact	Focused on service needs	Broader regional benefit

Recommendations

Given the analysis, a hybrid approach is recommended:

Short-Term: Collaborate with a college to restart or initiate a compressed delivery model ACP program with a planned September 2025 intake, leveraging their expertise and infrastructure while meeting immediate workforce needs. In addition, in the absence of tuition support from either Ontario Health HHR Secretariat or the Ontario Learn & Stay grant, develop a business case for the 2026-2027 budget for \$90,000 in funding to support six (6) ACP candidates to take the training through an approved college program.

Long-Term: Return to City Council should training needs not meet service staffing levels or Northeastern Ontario colleges discontinue delivering the ACP program and seek direction for staff to develop a business case to continue exploratory work for an internal ACP training program, focusing on feasibility, cost analysis, and strategic partnerships. Engage stakeholders, including frontline paramedics, educators, and community representatives, to ensure alignment with organizational and community needs. This long-term approach ensures ACP needs are met while building capacity for future self-reliance.