

Executive Summary

This report provides the Emergency Services Committee with information on the development and implementation of the Tactical Paramedic Program. 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. 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 have not had 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 recognizes the importance of having properly trained Paramedics to ensure that we are reducing risk for Paramedics and providing immediate access to advanced level of prehospital care for Police Services and citizens while responding to critical incidents.

Over the past year, Paramedic Services has been able to continue to work on the development of the program. Team member selection has been done, and their initial training has been completed. The specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) to allow Tactical Paramedics to work alongside Police Services Emergency Response Unit (ERU) has been ordered, however; some items are on back order due to the impacts of COVID-19. It is anticipated the remaining specialized PPE will arrive within the first quarter of 2021. In the interim, ERU has provided the necessary PPE required to allow the Tactical Paramedic Program to commence. The program became operational on January 8, 2021 and successfully responded to their first incident on January 14, 2021.

Background

The primary function of the Tactical Paramedic Program is to provide emergency medical support to preserve the safety, physical health, mental health, and overall well-being of police officers, suspects, and citizens who become injured or ill during a critical incident. A critical incident may include, but is not limited to, barricaded suspects, hostage situations, active shooters, or high-risk warrant execution.

Paramedic Services collaborated with Greater Sudbury Police Service Emergency Response Unit members to develop the operational guidelines to support the deployment of Tactical Paramedics in response to critical incidents. When the Tactical Paramedic is not involved in a critical incident they are in regular deployment, servicing emergency calls within the community.

Tactical Paramedic Selection Process

Information Sessions

Paramedic Services and two Staff Sergeants from the ERU collaborated to deliver two information sessions to all full-time Advanced Care Paramedics (minimum certification to apply) that were interested in the Tactical Paramedic Program. Topics covered during the sessions included the roles and responsibilities of a Tactical Paramedic, how and when the Tactical Paramedic will be deployed and timelines of the selection process. Members of the ERU provided an overview of the specialty units and the chain of command within their unit. After the sessions, all interested staff were encouraged to submit an expression of interest along with their resume.

Physical Fitness Testing

A total of fifteen (15) candidates submitted their expression of interest and resumes. All candidates met the initial requirements and were invited to attend the physical fitness stage of the selection process that was completed prior to restrictions put in place for COVID-19. The testing circuit used to evaluate the candidates is the same used by other Paramedic Services within the Province for their Tactical Paramedics. ERU members reviewed this testing and found it to be comparable to their onboarding and annual physical testing that they are required to complete. The physical fitness testing required the candidate wear a tactical medic operational vest (with plates) and tactical backpack. To earn a pass, the candidate was required to complete the entire test course in 24 minutes or less and accomplish all tasks as set out in the testing protocol as outlined below.

The test is comprised of a total of six circuits and five task stations. Each circuit consists of five (5) laps, four (4) of which are at a brisk walking pace and one (1) running/jogging catch-up lap, around the perimeter of an 82 meter course, for a total distance of approximately 2.5 km. The task stations consist of five (5) specific work-related tasks: flank/stealth manoeuvre, operations kit stair carry, 1.52 m five foot Obstacle Climb, Low Crawl and, 113 kg (250 lb.) Rescue Drag. The five (5) task stations are situated evenly throughout the test and must be completed by each candidate before continuing. The candidate is only allowed to run one (1) lap during each of the circuits.

Interviews and Background Checks

Following the physical fitness testing component, twelve (12) candidates moved onto the interview, background check and psychological assessment stages of the selection process.

The interview panel consisted of two managers from Paramedic Services and a Staff Sergeant from the ERU. During the interview stage, the hiring panel utilized virtual technology to eliminate in person contact. The candidates were asked the same questions and the panel evaluated their responses. All twelve candidates were required to complete a criminal background check that was conducted by the GSPS. The candidates were also required to complete a psychological

assessment that was administered by a local psychologist. The evaluation focused on the work and tasks that would be required of the Tactical Paramedic while working alongside the ERU.

Final Selection

A total of nine Paramedics were selected to the Tactical Paramedic Unit. The Tactical Unit consists of eight front line paramedics and one Platoon Superintendent (PS) to oversee the Tactical Paramedic Program. The additional duties for the Tactical Supervisor include the ongoing development of the program, policy development, establishment of continuous training and perform after action reviews with the ERU when the Tactical Unit is deployed.

Training

The initial tactical training was provided by ERU members and Tactical Paramedics from York Emergency Services. In early August, members from York Emergency Services Tactical Paramedics program came to Sudbury to deliver the Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) program over a three-day period. The focus of the program is to enhance our paramedic's knowledge and skills, providing quick interventions, initiate treatment to patients during a critical incident and extricate to an area of safety where further treatment can be rendered. During this training, members from the ERU participated in scenarios that allowed the Tactical Paramedics to practice the skills they acquired from the TCCC program. The feedback from all that attended was very positive, with one Paramedic commenting, "Absolutely loved the course. I have had the opportunity to train across Ontario and with multiple different agencies in the United States and the course that they presented and ran was top notch! The way that they delivered it was so applicable to our stage of development".

In mid-September, the Tactical Paramedics participated along with the ERU in their mandatory fall training session. The two-day training session allowed the opportunity for the Sudbury Tactical Paramedics and the ERU members to collaborate and establish roles and responsibilities when working at critical incidents together. Inspector Despatie from GSPS expressed how well the Tactical Paramedics worked with the Police ERU during the training sessions and stated that they are looking forward to having the Tactical Paramedic Program go operational. Ongoing training for Tactical Paramedics include bi-annual sessions conducted in the spring and fall with the ERU. In addition, Tactical Paramedics are encouraged to participate with the ERU members during their weekly sessions. On an annual basis, each Tactical Paramedic is required to successfully complete the physical fitness circuit that was established during the initial hiring phase.

Personal Protective Equipment

To ensure the health and safety of the Tactical Paramedics while working in high-risk operational environments alongside the ERU, specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) is issued to each member. The specialized PPE includes a ballistic helmet, a ballistic vest and a fire resistant uniform. The PPE was ordered during the early stages of the selection process of this program however; as a result of COVID-19, along with the manufacturer only running a production line twice a year, the delivery of our PPE shipment has been delayed. We anticipate

the arrival of PPE to our service within the first quarter of 2021. In the interim ERU have provided the necessary PPE required to launch the Tactical Paramedic Program on January 8, 2021.

Financial Implications

The business case for the Tactical Emergency Medical Services (TEMS) Unit was approved in the 2020 budget and included both a capital and operating component.

The 2020 Capital Budget included \$80,000 for the purchase of tactical gear. This gear is expected to be delivered during the first quarter of 2021.

The 2020 Operating Budget included a one-time budget of \$55,000 for initial training costs related to nine paramedics

Ongoing annual training costs will be covered within the existing annual operating budget. This will include two hours per month for each of the nine Tactical Paramedics. The total cost is estimated to be approximately \$14,000 annually.

Conclusion

Paramedic Services has successfully developed and implemented a Tactical Paramedic Program as approved by Council in 2020. The nine Tactical Paramedics have been selected and all members have received their initial training, to work alongside ERU members during critical incidents. The Tactical Paramedic Program provides opportunities for these paramedics to develop into future leaders by encouraging team building, camaraderie, participation in professional development and collaboration with Police ERU and Tactical Paramedic teams within the Province. The Tactical Paramedic Program went operational on January 8, 2021 and successfully responded to their first incident on January 14, 2021.