



Staff Report

Peterborough Regional Liaison Committee

To: Chair and Members of Committee
From: Randy Mellow, Chief of Paramedics
Date: February 13, 2020

Subject: PAR 2020 002 Eastern Ontario Paramedic Services Situational Overview

Recommendation: Receive for information.

Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide Peterborough Regional Liaison Committee with the background and summary of the Eastern Ontario Paramedic Services Situational Overview report commissioned by the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus (EOWC).

Background

In spring 2019, the Ministry of Health announced its intention to review and transform the health care system in Ontario to “improve patient experience and strengthen local services”. The land ambulance system across Ontario was identified as a component of the review with consideration of restructuring being mentioned in the review mandate. The Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus (EOWC) immediately banded together with paramedic services to investigate the potential impact this would have on not only the services but also the Municipalities and the patients’ they service. A further announcement made in the fall of 2019 noted that the MOH would work with the municipalities to investigate the best path to modernizing and strengthening public health and emergency health services.

The EOWC has a long history of working collaboratively with the Province of Ontario in order to promote shared interests. The EOWC prides itself on its relationship with government, and furthermore, its ability to speak with a unified voice and bring together the entire region of Eastern Ontario at one table. By doing so, they gather the necessary research and provide a portrait of the “situation on the ground,” and help better inform the provincial ministries of the current municipal realities.

In order to be proactive and better positioned to inform provincial discussions on the review of public health care in Ontario, the EOWC commissioned a review of Eastern

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Ontario Paramedic Services. The primary focus of the review was “to perform an environmental scan of the existing paramedic services including five-year predictive forecasts”.

Analysis

Based on the review, the EOWC has concluded that governance changes are not the solution to improving Ontario’s paramedic service. The following are key findings from the review that suggest three key areas on which the Province should focus:

1. **The dispatch system needs to be fixed**

We learned from the review that while over 68% of ambulance calls are dispatched as “highest urgency”, fewer than 26% are actually found to be of highest urgency when paramedics arrive. Addressing this disparity in the dispatch system will help improve and ensure that the deployment of resources meets actual need.

2. **Hospital offload delays must be addressed**

We learned from the review that, despite an overall decline in Emergency Department visits at hospitals, the time spent by Eastern Ontario paramedics in hospital offload delay is increasing annually. In Eastern Ontario alone, time lost to hospital offload delay averages 4.83 ambulance shifts per day, at an annual cost of approximately \$4.8 million.

3. **Community Paramedicine programs must be fully funded by the Province**

We also learned from the review that while seniors age 65+ account for only 22.8% of the population, they generate 55% of all ambulance responses. With an aging demographic, this statistic is anticipated to increase, not decrease, with seniors age 65+ expected to reach 26.9% of the population by 2024, thus substantially increasing paramedic service resourcing needs.

Ontario’s Aging at Home Strategy (2010) was intended to provide seniors with a continuum of community-based services that would allow them to live independently in their own homes and reduce the number of patients occupying acute care beds in hospitals. However, funding for the strategy did not extend to paramedic services, for which demand has substantially increased since the strategy’s implementation.

Community paramedicine programs that exist in the province have already been shown to reduce hospital visits by seniors. It is suggested that properly funded community paramedicine programs will allow the province to use existing well-trained paramedic resources to reduce hospital visits and calls for emergency service.

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Additional findings found within the report related to the management of paramedic services by EOWC municipalities include the following:

- Many paramedic services in Eastern Ontario are innovative leaders in community paramedicine and other health care collaborations that improve health and reduce the demand and associated costs on the health care system overall.
- EOWC municipalities have managed and substantially funded paramedic services effectively and efficiently for almost 20 years and have a vested interest in helping to shape the future of paramedic services delivery.
- All EOWC paramedic services are fully compliant with provincial legislation, regulations, standards and principles for land ambulance services operating in Ontario.
- All paramedic services are responsive to local needs and integrated into the provincial health care system provide reasonable ambulance resourcing accessible to all residents. They provide patient transport between health care facilities for medically essential services.
- All paramedic services operate seamlessly across jurisdictions as directed by provincially managed Central Ambulance Communication Centre (CACC).
- With the help of community partners, EOWC paramedic services provide health care support to elderly and vulnerable residents.
- Most paramedic services provide care at both primary and advanced life support levels. All have Implemented Response Time Performance Plans (RTPP) by Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS).
- All paramedic services perform well relative to targets. They operate from either fixed stations or central fleet centre.
- All paramedic services use fluid deployment to maintain emergency coverage. They proactively collaborate with one-another and with peers across the country, to maintain leading edge service design, and to coordinate decision-making and delivery.
- All paramedic services provide aspects of community paramedicine programs, formally and informally. Many via provincially funded programs including patient referrals and home visits.
- These services have improved overall patient wellness and reduced 911 calls and repeat hospital admissions.

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Financial Impact

There is no financial impact in relation to this report.

Anticipated Impacts on Local and/or First Nations Communities

None.

Link to County of Peterborough Strategic Plan Priorities

To provide high quality services to residents, businesses and Townships.

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Financial Responsibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry & Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organizational Development |

In consultation with:

1. CAO Troy Speck

Communication Completed/required:

The Eastern Ontario Paramedic Services Situational Overview report and associated findings, as summarized within this report have been shared with the Ministry of Health EHS Modernization Review Team.

Attachments

1. PowerPoint presentation "Presentation of Study Findings to EOWC, October 2019 prepared by Apexpro Consulting Inc.". Link to full EOWC report, Key Messages and Peterborough Paramedics Service Specific Profile <https://www.ptbocounty.ca/en/governing/eowc-paramedic-services.aspx>

Respectfully Submitted,
Original Signed by:

Randy Mellow
Chief of Paramedics

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