

Staff Report



To	Joint Social Services and Land Ambulance Committee
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Wednesday, June 11, 2025
Subject	Paramedic Service Response Performance 2024 and Performance Plan Recommendation for 2026

Recommendation

1. That the report on the Response Time Performance results for Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service in 2024 be received, and
 2. That Committee recommends to City of Guelph Council that the Recommended Response Time Performance Plan for 2026 be approved.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide a report on the performance of the Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service (GWPS) in 2024, including adherence to the 2024 Response Time Performance Plan (RTPP) as set by Guelph City Council, and to present a proposed Response Time Performance Plan (RTPP) for the Paramedic Service for 2026 to be recommended to City of Guelph Council for adoption.

Key Findings

In 2024 GWPS was generally able to meet the target response times that were established by City of Guelph Council in 2023 despite an approximate five percent increase in emergency call volumes. This performance was made possible by enhancements to staffing added through the City of Guelph budget process and by a reduction in the hospital offload delay times.

Staff are recommending that the RTPP be established for 2026 with the same targets and compliance rates as in 2025.

Strategic Plan Alignment

Developing a Response Time Performance Plan is part of the City's focus on People and the Economy and Supporting community well-being by improving emergency response times.

Future Guelph Theme

People and Economy

Future Guelph Objectives

People and Economy: Support community well-being

Financial Implications

The response time performance is a key data set that supports budget investment and is a measurable goal of the City of Guelph Strategic Plan. The Paramedic Business Plan in connection with the actual response time results will be used to demonstrate the recommended timing of expanded paramedic services required to meet response time targets over this period.

Report

The Provincial Ministry of Health requires that the City of Guelph, as the delivery agent for Paramedic land ambulance services in the area, approves an annual RTPP that includes target response times for the Paramedic Service to different levels of severity of emergencies and set the compliance level by which the targets are to be met. The RTPP is to be communicated to the Ministry of Health by October 31 of each year, and the actual performance as measured by those targets and compliance levels is to be reported by March 31 of the following year. The response plans and compliance results for all municipalities are posted on the Provincial website.

The purpose of the RTPP is to increase transparency and accountability and to set reasonable expectations in the community on the response time for an ambulance to an emergency call.

Response times to emergency calls are important metrics for Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service as they can have a direct impact on patient outcomes in the most severe injuries and illnesses. They also impact community satisfaction with the service.

Response times are influenced by the proximity of the nearest available ambulance to the site of the emergency, which is a factor in the number of ambulances available to respond at the time of the call. GWPS utilizes a sophisticated deployment strategy that relocates available ambulances to pre-determined areas as others are dispatched to emergency calls. As the number of available ambulances decreases, the deployment locations become more dispersed, resulting in increased response times.

There are six target and compliance rates required in the RTPP. Five of these are related to the severity of the injury or illness, as measured by the Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS), which is a score shared by hospitals and other services across Canada and involve the time for a paramedic to arrive at the scene.

The five levels of CTAS include:

- CTAS 1 – requires resuscitation (i.e. cardiac arrest)
- CTAS 2 – requires emergent care (i.e. major trauma)
- CTAS 3 – requires urgent care (i.e. mild shortness of breath)
- CTAS 4 – requires less urgent care (i.e. minor trauma)
- CTAS 5 – requires non-urgent care (i.e. sore throat)

The sixth target and compliance rate that is included in the RTPP measures the time to deliver a cardiac defibrillator to the scene of a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). This is not specific to a paramedic resource and can include public access defibrillators, Fire Departments, or other allied agencies arriving first. Actual response times, especially with public access defibrillators, are often difficult to capture consistently.

This response time target is set by the Ministry of Health at six (6) minutes, but the expected compliance rates to that target are set by Council.

The Provincial ambulance dispatch system answers 911 calls and prioritizes emergency responses based on the probable CTAS level of the patient involved. This allows resources to be preferentially sent to the most severe emergencies. A new computer algorithm is being introduced at the local Central Ambulance Communication Centre (CACC) in December of 2025 that will increase the ability to triage calls. The new system, Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) is expected to allow greater focus on the most severe injuries and illnesses but can be expected to increase the times to lower priority calls.

Performance in 2024

GWPS was able to improve compliance to the Response Time Plan as established by City of Guelph Council in 2024 as compared to compliance in 2023. As per the chart below, the service met the targets and compliance levels for CTAS 1, 2, 3 and 5, and achieved an 87 percent compliance rate to the 15-minute response time target for CTAS 4 patients where the set compliance rate was 90 percent. As mentioned above, CTAS 4 patients have less urgent injuries or illnesses. The service was able to achieve these results despite a 5 percent increase in annual call volume over 2023 responses, to over 31,200 calls for assistance.

Factors that allowed GWPS to achieve these results included additional paramedic resources approved in the City of Guelph budget process and added in 2024. This includes four paramedics (one 12-hour shift, seven days per week) in the City of Guelph and another four paramedics out of the Centre Wellington station. Performance was also aided by a reduction in hospital offload delays, as per a [report](#) presented to committee in May.

The table below displays Council’s approved RTPP for 2024, and GWPS’s compliance with its response time targets. The Paramedic Service was required to report these results to the Ontario Ministry of Health by March 31, 2025.

CTAS Category	Response Time Target	2024 Compliance as approved by CoG Council	2024 Actual Compliance Rate
Level 1	8 minutes (set by MOH)	65%	75%
Level 2	10 minutes	75%	77%
Level 3	15 minutes	90%	90%
Level 4	15 minutes	90%	87%
Level 5	20 minutes	90%	91%
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	6 minutes (set by MOH)	65%	63.5%

As noted in the chart, the service was also not able to facilitate having a defibrillator reach a patient in cardiac arrest within 6 minutes at least 65 percent of the time, achieving an estimated 63.5 percent performance rate. Efforts to improve this performance focus on encouraging and supporting Public Access Defibrillators and awareness of their use and effectiveness.

The RTPP measures the response time of the service as a whole, including the mix of urban and rural areas. In rural areas, response times are typically longer due to the greater distances between calls. Consequently, the report is less helpful in assessing performance in a subsection of the response area.

In attempting to provide a clear picture of responses in the Wellington County Townships, performance can be measured and compared to past performance by calculating the average and 90th percentile response times to 'Code 4' (life-threatening or limb-threatening, utilizing lights and sirens) responses.

The average response time provides a reasonable expectation of the response time for paramedics, and the measurement changes more rapidly in response to changes implemented by the service. The 90th percentile response time is a proxy for the longest response time. It is a standardized performance testing metric that measures the longest response time but eliminates the highest 10 percent from the perspective that those calls will likely have a related circumstance such as a wrong address given or a patient that could not initially be found.

Note that this data does not include responses to calls that are categorized as 'Code 3' calls – described as urgent but not life-threatening and no lights and sirens are used. An example of a Code 3 call would be for a patient with ongoing abdominal pain in a long-term care facility.

The table below shows the average and 90th percentile response times to Code 4 calls in Guelph and each of the townships in Wellington County.

GUELPH WELLINGTON PARAMEDIC SERVICE CODE 4 RESPONSE TIME TRENDS: 2020-2024						
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Combined	Number of Code 4 calls	15,506	17,264	18,045	17,091	18,824
	90th Percentile	12:29	12:36	14:00	13:18	12:54
	Average Response Time	07:28	07:39	08:08	07:48	07:26
City of Guelph	Number of Code 4 calls	9,843	11,052	11,251	11,031	11,904
	90th Percentile	10:08	10:00	10:32	09:58	09:20
	Average Response Time	07:00	06:49	06:53	06:38	06:12
County of Wellington	Number of Code 4 calls	5,663	6,212	6,794	6,060	6,920
	90th Percentile	16:00	16:00	17:14	16:35	16:12
	Average Response Time	09:30	09:28	10:15	09:54	09:38
Puslinch	Number of Code 4 calls	647	781	839	774	866
	90th Percentile	15:00	15:00	16:32	16:32	16:31
	Average Response Time	10:06	09:58	10:43	11:13	11:17
Erin	Number of Code 4 calls	682	598	643	531	527
	90th Percentile	18:00	19:01	20:42	19:58	18:35
	Average Response Time	12:18	12:52	13:29	13:28	12:38
Minto	Number of Code 4 calls	582	629	672	608	735
	90th Percentile	17:00	16:33	17:24	16:35	16:06
	Average Response Time	10:30	10:10	11:14	10:39	10:24
Centre Wellington	Number of Code 4 calls	1,785	1,985	2,057	1,948	2,253
	90th Percentile	13:00	13:31	14:11	13:59	12:51
	Average Response Time	07:30	07:39	08:06	07:57	07:37
Guelph-Eramosa	Number of Code 4 calls	851	995	1,193	896	892
	90th Percentile	15:00	14:49	16:07	15:30	15:15
	Average Response Time	09:44	09:37	10:28	10:14	10:06
Mapleton	Number of Code 4 calls	305	334	413	406	519
	90th Percentile	21:00	20:38	21:49	19:59	20:54
	Average Response Time	13:49	12:52	13:16	11:50	12:29
Wellington North	Number of Code 4 calls	811	890	977	897	1,128
	90th Percentile	15:52	16:29	18:10	16:51	16:40
	Average Response Time	08:29	08:49	09:59	09:11	08:51

Source: ADDS, MoH Data Warehouse.

Response Time Improvement Strategies

GWPS continues to make efforts to be as effective and efficient as possible by making ongoing adjustments to the deployment strategies, utilizing alternate destination practices to transport appropriate people to sites other than hospital emergency departments, and utilizing the Community Paramedicine program to help avoid vulnerable residents having emergencies occur.

In addition, the City of Guelph recently contracted an external consultant, Operational Research in Health Limited (ORH) to conduct sophisticated computer modelling that predicted the resource requirements needed to maintain and improve paramedic response times. The resulting report and recommendations also included a means of establishing target response times for each of the lower tiered municipalities based on their weighted population density. The first of the

recommended incremental resource enhancements are included in the 2026 City of Guelph budget, and further recommended enhancements can be included in future budget proposals.

Risks to Maintaining and Improving Response Times

While the resources required to maintain and improve response times is known, the ability to add the resources may be impacted by the capacity of the current paramedic stations in Guelph and Wellington County. As noted in the ORH report, the current paramedic stations do not have the facilities and space to accommodate the required increases in resources. Plans to improve those stations are being developed by the City of Guelph’s Facilities and Energy Management Department.

Other risks to response times include the potential for another increase in hospital offload times. While the service is appreciative of the efforts made by the hospitals to reduce this impact on the community and the financial support provided by the province for this purpose, circumstances beyond the control of the City could cause these delays to increase again.

Recommendations for the 2026 Response Time Performance Plan

The ORH report predicts a continued increase in emergency call volumes in 2025 and into 2026 with the associated increase in pressures on response times. Despite the pressures and uncertainties, staff are not recommending a reduction in the response time targets and the associated reduced services to our residents. Staff will continue to strive to optimize response times and provide services as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The RTPP targets and compliance rates recommended for 2026:

Canadian Triage Acuity Scale Levels	Recommended Response Time Target	Recommended Compliance Rate
CTAS Level 1	8 minutes (set by the Province)	65%
CTAS Level 2	10 minutes	75%
CTAS Level 3	15 minutes	90%
CTAS Level 4	15 minutes	90%
CTAS Level 5	20 minutes	90%
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	6 minutes (set by the Province)	65%

Financial Implications

The response time performance is a key data set that supports budget investment and is a measurable goal of the City of Guelph Strategic Plan. The Paramedic Business Plan in connection with the actual response time results will be used to demonstrate the recommended timing of expanded paramedic services required to meet response time targets over this period.

Consultations and Engagement

The Response Time Performance Plan will be provided to the Ontario Ministry of Health, where it will subsequently be posted on their website. It will also be posted on the City's website: [Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services](#)

Attachments

None.

Departmental Approval

None.

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