

Staff Report



To Chair and Members of the Social Services Committee

From Stephen Dewar, Chief, Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service

Date January 12, 2022

Subject **Paramedic Service Community Paramedic Initiatives**

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide awareness of services, in addition to emergency medical responses, being provided by Guelph Wellington Paramedics that are designed to reduce emergency call volume and provide better care to the residents of Guelph and Wellington County.

Report

Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services continues to provide prompt responses to emergency medical calls and provide quality professional care to the residents of Wellington County. Although the data from 2021 is still being analyzed, it is evident that the call volume has increased by at least 5% over 2020 responses.

In addition to emergency responses, GWPS continues to provide services through our Community Paramedicine program. These services are funded through grants from the Provincial Ministry of Health, and beginning in 2021 also include a grant from the Ministry of Long Term Care to provide services to residents who need support to remain in their residences and to prevent emergencies from occurring.

In 2021, Paramedics working in the Community Paramedicine program completed over 1,200 non-emergent home visits to provide services and care for residents who were recently discharged from hospital and identified as being at a high risk for readmission, residents on LTC wait lists, and residents with significant medical conditions that had accessed emergency medical services on multiple occasions. Other clients, identified through the program's close working relationship with the hospitals, health teams and partner organizations, include patients who are elderly or frail and may be deemed as 'crisis' in the community, or requiring Alternate Levels of Care (ALC) to return home safely. The program has also provided services to those who face mental health challenges and who respond well to frequent visits to establish a supportive network and avoid frequent hospital or 911 use.

In addition to home visits, Community Paramedics utilize technology to remotely monitor clients in the community with chronic conditions, contacting them directly when biometric readings are noted to fall outside of expected parameters and before medical conditions worsen to the state of emergency. Enhanced funding in 2021 has allowed this program to expand to monitor 95 clients per month, with over 60% of those residing in Wellington County. In 2020 this program was modified to including monitoring and ensuring the safety of patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 and who are recuperating in their home. To date the program has assisted more than 65 Wellington County residents as they recover from COVID-19.

Specific to the COVID pandemic, paramedics have been participating in efforts to test and vaccinate residents by providing first, second and third doses to predominantly homebound and bedridden patients who are not able to travel for their vaccines. Vaccinations have also been administered to a variety of other individuals including those who have mental health issues or barriers to accessing clinics.

Community Paramedics have also continued their efforts to assist with COVID testing for home bound residents, as well as assisting in congregate care settings that required assistance with outbreak management. Over 200 COVID tests have been completed in Wellington County by this team in 2021. With the latest rapidly changing COVID situation, this team is again stepping forward to assist with further testing, vaccination and monitoring needs in our communities.

Our Community Paramedic team have also taken the lead in coordinating our efforts to care for Palliative patients in our community. As reported at a previous Committee meeting, all paramedics in Guelph Wellington have been trained on palliative care delivery at home should 911 be activated. Through Provincial Medical directives, some of this care can only be provided when palliative patients are pre-identified and registered for this program.

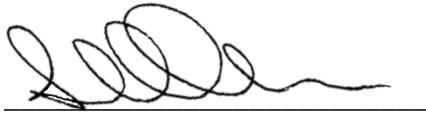
As part of the enhanced funding for Community Paramedicine, GWPS has been able to dramatically increase the number of Community Paramedics working each day, which has also allowed for increased program capacity during one of the most challenging times in healthcare. Despite routinely having 60% of Community Paramedicine clients living in Wellington County, the area continues to only be served by one Community Paramedic per day working from space provided by the Minto Fire Department, while there are three Community Paramedics per day in the Guelph area. Frequently a Community Paramedic from Guelph is required to assist in Wellington County and must drive up from the city. We hope in the near future to be able to move into the County facility in Mapleton that has recently been renovated, and potentially staff a second Community Paramedic at that location to improve our efficiency.

Implications of the Program

The Community Paramedic program, through increased collaboration with rural health teams, is allowing GWPS to improve care to patients in the community and to reduce the incidents of 911 calls and reduce the demands on local Emergency Departments.

The program has been able to adapt to enhance the healthcare system capacity during the COVID pandemic, and to assist in the Province's overall goal of providing the right care, at the right time, in the right place for all residents.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a trailing line, positioned above a horizontal line.

Stephen Dewar
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