

Information Report



To Chair and Members of the Social Services Committee

From Stephen Dewar, Chief and General Manager, Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service

Date March 8, 2023

Subject **Paramedic Service 2022 Data Review**

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide an update to the Committee on the performance of Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service through 2022.

Key Findings

Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service continues to see an increase in emergency calls in Guelph and Wellington County. Response times to emergency calls are affected by this increase and by extensive and frequent offload delays in hospital Emergency Departments.

Report

Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service continues to see an ongoing increase in emergency call volumes. In 2022 the service surpassed 30,000 calls, representing an eight percent increase over 2021 responses. A consultant's report in 2016 predicted a 43% increase in call volumes by 2026, and our results from last year are a 40.5% increase since that assessment. Our service is currently responding to more than 82 calls for assistance each day.

The impacts of this increase in call volumes have been somewhat offset by an incremental increase in staffing that has been approved for our service in successive budget years. This includes a recently approved increase of four paramedics and two supervisors added by Guelph City Council in the City's 2023 budget confirmation.

Of interest, as we track the increase in call volumes, we have seen a trend of a disproportionate increase in calls for children. Our data shows a 43% increase in calls for patients under 18 years of age from 2021 numbers, and this is a trend that other paramedic services across Canada are also noting.

The most common medical complaints of patients treated by paramedics in 2022 included respiratory disease, chest pain and drug overdose.

The increase in call volumes along with hospital offload delays is straining our ability to maintain our response times to emergency calls. Through 2022 we responded to calls that were triaged as potentially life-threatening in an average of 8 minutes and 8 seconds, and in 90% of cases within 14 minutes. These times are higher than in 2021 where our average response time was 7 minutes and 39 seconds and our 90th percentile was 12 minutes and 36 seconds. Our compliance with our target response times set by Guelph City Council will be impacted by these increased response times.

As previously reported to the committee, hospital offload delays are a significant factor in our increasing response times. Our paramedics were required to stay in the hospital to care for our patients for almost 11,000 hours in 2022, more than double the number of hours in 2021.

We continue to work with our local hospitals and with the other paramedic services provincially to find solutions to the hospital offload issue. Other ongoing mitigation strategies include our use of a Fit2Sit program by which we can offload patients into the hospital waiting room where appropriate, batching of patients in offload delay where one paramedic can care for multiple patients, freeing up other paramedics, and the use of alternate destinations where approved by the Province. Our service and the City of Guelph have also established a media campaign asking our residents to 'Make the Right Call' to reduce non-emergent 911 calls. While these do not represent a large number of calls, they do add to the overall hospital problem.

To further help mitigate the impacts of offload delays, the Province has recently announced that the City of Guelph will receive funding to be shared with the Guelph General Hospital to staff a Dedicated Offload Nurse for 12 hours per day. The funding is one-time and for the current Provincial funding year, but we hope that it will be continued into 2023. We are working with our partners at Guelph General Hospital to assist them in putting this resource in place.

Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service continued through 2022 to provide services to our residents through our Community Paramedicine program, funded by a grant from the Provincial Ministry of Long Term Care. The Community Paramedicine program has been shown to prevent acute emergencies from occurring and reduce the demand for emergency room and hospital services.

In 2022 our Community Paramedicine program enrolled and monitored over 13,000 residents and conducted home visits for approximately 18 people per day. Of those residents whom we provided services approximately 10% responded to our survey indicating that, had it not been for this program, they felt that they would have needed to access 911 or hospital emergency department services.

Summary

In 2022 Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service saw a continuation of the trend of increasing numbers of emergency calls. The higher call volumes along with hospital offload delays have led to higher response times to emergency calls.

GWPS is taking steps to help mitigate the increasing call volume and the impact on our hospitals, including through our Community Paramedicine program.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Stephen Dewar
General Manager / Chief
Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service
519-822-1260 ext. 2805
Stephen.dewar@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Public Services, City of Guelph
519-822-1260 extension 2588
colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca