

Supplementary Report to Budget Committee – Toronto Paramedic Services

Date: January 21, 2021

To: Budget Committee

From: A/Chief, Toronto Paramedic Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report details four strategies proposed by Toronto Paramedic Services that are in addition to the current 2021 Staff Recommended Operating Budget, fully offset through new and expanded provincial funding:

- Expanded Community Paramedicine programming (supporting Home & Community Care);
- Expanded Community Paramedicine programming (supporting Long-Term Care);
- Temporary conversion of a significant number of part-time Paramedics to full-time status; and
- Modified implementation of year two of Toronto Paramedic Services' Multi-year Staffing and Systems Plan.

These strategies are recommended to support new programming and maintain staffing, both of which have become progressively necessary due to greater community spread of COVID-19, and staffing and healthcare/hospital pressures.

Since the beginning of December 2020, COVID-related activity has created more demand on paramedic and healthcare services. The Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care are supporting new programming focused on Community Paramedic-led Home and Community Care services as well as support for long-term care. In addition to the staff needed to support new programming, Toronto Paramedic Services is experiencing an increased number of staff on self-isolation/quarantine and occupational stress injuries, requiring backfill to maintain service delivery.

It is anticipated that the continuing healthcare capacity challenges will also result in significant ambulance offload delays in 2021 which will negatively impact ambulance availability in the community and response times to critically-ill patients. Maintaining ambulance availability will be dependent on securing additional staff to address these pressures.

The four strategies to be implemented through added provincial funding will support Toronto Paramedic Services in addressing the above COVID-19 related challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Chief of Toronto Paramedic Services recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the Acting Chief, Toronto Paramedic Services, to implement the following four strategies in 2021, resulting in an increase of \$10.1 million gross and net \$0 to Toronto Paramedic Services' 2021 Staff Recommended Operating Budget:

- Community Paramedicine Expansion to Support Home and Community Care (includes COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, time-sensitive, preventative support for clients returning home from scheduled hospital procedures);
- Community Paramedicine Expansion to Support chronic and immediate healthcare needs of those awaiting Long-Term Care Placement;
- Temporary Conversion of a significant number of Part-time Paramedics to Full-time Status; and
- Modified Implementation of Year Two of the Multi-year Staffing and Systems Plan

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Toronto Paramedic Services recommends approval to add four (4) 100% Provincially funded strategies*, to the 2021 Staff Recommended Operating Budget as shown in the table below.

No.	Strategy	Gross	Revenue	Net	FTEs	Period
		(000's)	(000's)	(000's)		
1	Community Paramedicine - COVID-19	2,087.3	2,087.3	-	-	Jan-Mar
2	Community Paramedicine - LTC Program	2,250.0	2,250.0	-	21.0	Apr-Dec
3	Paramedic Conversion (PT to FT)	3,500.8	3,500.8	-	-	9 Mths
4	Staff Plan Year Two	2,293.3	2,293.3	-	66.0	Oct-Dec
		10,131.5	10,131.5	-	87.0	

*Assumes 100% recovery of costs from Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care.

The Province has confirmed 100% funding for the first and second Community Paramedicine initiatives. Funding for items #3 ("Paramedic Conversion (PT to FT)") and #4 ("Staff Plan Year Two") will be submitted to the Province as 2021 COVID-19 expenses, requesting 100% funding as these are new pressures on paramedic service delivery directly related to the pandemic. Toronto Paramedic Services has received verbal commitment from the Ministry of Health (MOH) that this funding will be approved for 2021 as it is clearly a response to system-related COVID-19 pressures. In addition, all of these costs were 100% funded in 2020. In the unlikely event that this funding is not approved by the MOH, Toronto Paramedic Services will defer 2021 contributions to the equipment and vehicle reserves which will have no impact on service delivery.

Community Paramedicine - COVID-19 and the Temporary Conversion of part-time Paramedics to full time are 2021 initiatives only, and as such, will have no 2022 budget impact. The Community Paramedicine - LTC Program will be fully operational for the full year in 2022 and will remain 100% funded by the Ministry of Long-Term Care for a net \$0 budget impact in 2022 and 2023. Annualization of the Staff Plan Year Two will

increase gross expenditures in 2022 by \$6.2 million. Toronto Paramedic Services will submit these costs for 100% Provincial funding in 2022 – these positions will be used to address ongoing pressures on ambulance availability as a result of continued healthcare capacity challenges at hospitals as they deal with a backlog of services due to the pandemic, thereby impacting hospital occupancy. Based on the confirmed MOH support for COVID-19 related pressures in 2020 and 2021, Toronto Paramedic Services is confident that 100% funding will be provided for 2022, consistent with past experience.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has been provided the financial impacts associated with this program for review as part of the 2021 budget process.

DECISION HISTORY

Since Toronto Paramedic Services' original submission of its 2021 Staff Recommended Operating Budget, the Division has received 100% funding confirmation from the Province for enhanced and expanded Community Paramedicine programming. Toronto Paramedic Services has also experienced increased operational pressures during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Toronto Paramedic Services has brought forward this supplemental report, recommending the approval of four strategies that support new programming and maintain staffing, with a net zero impact on the Division's 2021 Staff Recommended Operating Budget.

COMMENTS

Given the 100% funding confirmation received from the Province for expanded and enhanced programming for Community Paramedicine and the increased operational pressures Toronto Paramedic Services has experienced during the second wave of the pandemic, the Division proposes implementing the following four (4) strategies in 2021, resulting in a net zero impact to the Division's Staff Recommended Operating Budget:

Community Paramedicine Expansion to Support Home and Community Care

This program will continue to help increase Home and Community Care services throughout the city, including providing time-sensitive, preventative healthcare for those clients returning home after hospitalization, providing vaccinations to homebound clients and targeted COVID-19 testing in congregate settings and where required.

Toronto Paramedic Services has received 100% funding for Q1 2021 of this program from the Ministry of Health. Due to the current COVID-19 environment, Toronto Paramedic Services anticipates this funding to continue to the end of 2021.

Community Paramedicine Expansion to Support Long-Term Care

This initiative is part of the Province's modernization plan to address systemic barriers in long-term care bed development and the growing demand for long-term care. This initiative supports the chronic and immediate healthcare needs of vulnerable individuals waiting for placement in long-term care homes or who will soon be eligible for long-term

care. Community Paramedics will provide home visits, referrals for care and point-of-care testing, e.g., for COVID-19.

Toronto Paramedic Services has received a commitment for 100% funding to support this initiative for up to three years from the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

Temporary Conversion of Part-time Paramedics to Full-time Status

This strategy would result in the conversion of up to 180 part-time Paramedics to full-time status for a period of nine months, starting in February 2021, to support new Community Paramedicine programming and to backfill increasing numbers of staff on self-isolation/quarantine and occupational stress injuries.

This conversion addresses immediate system and staff pressures in the first quarter of 2021. These pressures include:

- Increased in-hospital times due to hospital occupancy/healthcare system capacity challenges.
- Added time and effort required by frontline Paramedics to perform proper infection prevention and control procedures before and after each emergency call (e.g., PPE donning and doffing, equipment and vehicle cleaning/disinfecting, etc.).
- No new staff available for hire until April 2021 when colleges normally expect to graduate new paramedics.
- Increased need to backfill for staff absent due to self-isolation/quarantine and occupational stress injuries.

The cost of this strategy will be submitted to the Ministry of Health, requesting 100% COVID-19 funding as these are new pressures on paramedic service delivery directly related to the pandemic.

Modified Implementation of Year Two of Multi-year Staffing and Systems Plan

In May 2019, City Council adopted Toronto Paramedic Services' Multi-Year Staffing and Systems Plan (EC5.3) report, recommending the addition of 295 frontline Paramedic FTEs over five years (2020 – 2024). The report recommended that each year, the Chief, Toronto Paramedic Services bring forward a business case through the 2020 and future budget processes to add the necessary frontline Paramedic staffing and supervision.

As part of Toronto Paramedic Services' 2020 Operating Budget, year one of this plan was approved by Council in February 2020. However, hiring of additional Paramedics was deferred until later in 2020 due to a delay in onboarding of new staff during wave 1 of the pandemic and significantly reduced service demand in the first eight months of 2020. In recognition of the above, year two of the Plan was also not included in the Division's original 2021 Staff Recommended Operating Budget submission.

Subsequently, in the last quarter of 2020, the service experienced *increased* demand due to community resurgence of the virus and an increase in hospital outbreaks leading to reduced hospital capacity.

The most recent Provincial information indicates that a mass COVID-19 vaccine roll-out for the general public is anticipated in the late spring/early summer 2021. As a result, Toronto Paramedic Services has begun planning for a return to pre-COVID-19 ambulance service demand. However, the impact of COVID-19 on the healthcare system will continue to be a challenge for many years. High hospital occupancy will continue to impact the availability of services and flow of patients throughout hospitals which will impact transfer of care of ambulance patients in emergency departments. Any time lost to ambulance transfer of care negatively impacts ambulance availability in the community. Maintaining ambulance availability will be dependent on securing additional staff to address these pressures. Any delay in onboarding of new staff as seen in 2020 will also impact staffing capacity.

This request is to add 62 frontline and 4 support FTEs starting October 1, 2021. The cost will be included in the 2021 submission of COVID-19 expenses to the Ministry of Health requesting 100% funding as these are new, significant pressures that will impact future paramedic service delivery and are directly related to the pandemic.

Conclusion

Since Toronto Paramedic Services' original submission of its 2021 Staff Recommended Operating Budget, the Division has received 100% funding confirmation from the Province for enhanced and expanded Community Paramedicine programming. Toronto Paramedic Services has also experienced increased operational pressures during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic due to greater community spread of COVID-19, an increased number of staff on self-isolation/quarantine and occupational stress injuries, and healthcare/hospital pressures which negatively impact ambulance availability in the community. The strategies recommended in this report have a net zero budget impact and will help Toronto Paramedic Services support new programming and maintain staffing levels to address these pressures.

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SIGNATURE

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