



Ratio of Full-time to Part-time Paramedics

Date: September 8, 2020
To: Executive Committee
From: City Manager and Chief People Officer
Wards: All

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to the July 28, 2020, Council request that the City Manager and the Chief People Officer, in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health, report back to City Council on a possible change to the ratio of full-time to part-time Paramedics so that more Paramedics have paid sick days to decrease the likelihood of Paramedics working in other positions that may expose them to greater risk. Toronto Paramedic Services was also consulted for this report.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has persisted, the City and Toronto Paramedic Services have continued to implement and maintain initiatives to support the wellness of all Toronto Paramedic Services staff, including part-time Paramedics:

- Uninterrupted pay for every Toronto Paramedic Services employee on self-isolation due to possible exposure to COVID-19.
- Part-time Paramedics absent due to COVID-19-related symptoms continue to be compensated for pre-scheduled shifts.
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits coverage for all accepted claims regarding illnesses/injuries acquired while working, including COVID-19.
- Launch of a Staff Support Centre to track COVID-19-related absences and to answer staff enquiries related to the pandemic.
- Self-screening of all staff for symptoms of illness prior to starting work each shift to increase protection of paramedics and the public.
- Psychological Health and Wellness Plan for all staff, focused on prevention, reduction of stigma, timely intervention, post-incident support and increasing available resources.
- In April 2020, the City approved the provision of psychological services for part-time Paramedics provided through the BEACON program offered by the City's benefits provider, Green Shield Canada.

It should also be noted that, in Ontario, both full-time and part-time Paramedics are permitted to work for more than one employer. A portion of both full-time and part-time

Toronto Paramedic Services Paramedics are known to work for other Paramedic services outside Toronto.

In addition, the Ontario government has provided funding for temporary pandemic pay to all active frontline Paramedics, regardless of job classification, in the form of a temporary top-up based on hourly wages as well as monthly lump sum payments. This pay is in recognition of the challenges and heightened risk faced during the COVID-19 outbreak. The goals of this temporary pandemic pay were to provide additional support and relief to frontline workers, encourage staff to continue working and attract prospective employees, and to help maintain safe staffing levels and the operation of critical frontline services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager and Chief People Officer recommend that City Council:

1. Receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from this report.

The Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of July 28, 2020, City Council adopted the report from the City Manager, the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, and the Chief People Officer – *Update on the City's Response to COVID-19 and Financial Impacts*. City Council requested that the City Manager and the Chief People Officer, in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health, report back to the September 30 and October 1, 2020, City Council meeting on a possible change to the ratio of full-time to part-time Paramedics so that more Paramedics have paid sick days to decrease the likelihood of Paramedics working in other positions that may expose them to greater risk.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.CC23.3>

COMMENTS

The ratio of full-time Paramedics to part-time Paramedics is governed by the Collective Agreement between Toronto Civic Employees' Union (TCEU) Local 416 and the City. The part-time Paramedic classification was first introduced in 2012. The purpose of part-time Paramedics is to permit operational flexibility in scheduling and alleviate the

need for full-time Paramedics to work excessive hours. Part-time Paramedics are scheduled for planned absences of full-time Paramedics and unpredictable, short-term increases in demand. This has been an important priority for the City and Toronto Paramedic Services in order to respond to call volumes, improve call response times, provide full-time staff with greater vacation and lieu-time opportunities, reduce the need for overtime and improve compliance with meal break provisions.

The current ratio of full-time to part-time Paramedics employed with Toronto Paramedic Services is four to one (4:1). This ratio was awarded on July 30, 2018 in an Interest Arbitration Award by Arbitrator Stout. The current ratio was a slight improvement over the initial 2012 ratio of five to one (5:1). The use of part-time Paramedics is commonplace across Ontario. Most services use part-time Paramedics and either have no restrictions on the number of part-time Paramedics or are allowed to use a higher ratio of part-time Paramedics than the City. The majority of part-time Paramedics hired by the City obtain permanent or temporary full-time positions within a few years of hiring.

During the most recent 2020 round of collective bargaining, the part-time ratio and other terms related to Paramedics were the subject of negotiations between the parties and were unresolved. In accordance with the Collective Agreement, the City and Union agreed to refer all outstanding matters related to Paramedics to interest arbitration. This matter is the subject of an ongoing interest arbitration process.

Efforts to Support Staff

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City and Toronto Paramedic Services have implemented several initiatives to support the wellness of all Toronto Paramedic Services staff, including part-time Paramedics:

- Every Toronto Paramedic Services employee, regardless of job classification, who is asymptomatic and is on self-isolation due to an exposure to a probable case of COVID-19, on-duty or off-duty, continues to be paid their normal wages for the duration of the self-isolation.
- Every Toronto Paramedic Services employee, regardless of job classification, who is showing signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and is on self-isolation continues to be paid their normal wages during the self-isolation period. Part-time Paramedics without paid ill time are compensated for pre-scheduled shifts during this period.
- All work-related illnesses/injuries acquired in the course of an employee's employment, including COVID-19, are covered by Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits, if accepted. This process also applies to part-time Paramedics.
- Since March 17, 2020, Toronto Paramedic Services has operated a Staff Support Centre that tracks COVID-19-related absences for all staff and also serves as an information resource for all Toronto Paramedic Services staff.
- On March 19, 2020, Toronto Paramedic Services implemented mandatory pre-shift self-screening for exposure to COVID-19 and/or related symptoms to increase protection of paramedics and the public.

- In February 2017, TPS launched a comprehensive Psychological Health and Wellness Plan for all staff, focused on prevention, reduction of stigma, timely intervention, post-incident support and increasing available resources. It was developed in consultation with Union Locals 416 and 79, the City's Employee Assistance Program staff, City of Toronto Ombudsman, and People & Equity's Disability Management section.
- In April 2020, the City approved the provision of psychological services for part-time Paramedics provided through the BEACON program offered by the City's benefits provider (GSC).
- On May 15, 2020, TPS implemented a universal masking policy for all staff working in Operations (e.g., all Paramedics, Superintendents) and Operations facilities to protect staff health and safety and reduce the potential for community transmission of COVID-19 among staff. A similar policy was implemented in the TPS Communications Centre on July 23, 2020.

As the response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the City and Toronto Paramedic Services will continue to follow advice and direction from the Ministry of Health, Toronto Public Health, and Occupational Health & Safety to guide future decision-making about supporting the wellness of all divisional staff, including part-time Paramedics.

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SIGNATURE

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