
REPORT TITLE: **Building an Enhanced Community Paramedicine Program in Peel**

FROM: Nancy Polsinelli, Commissioner of Health Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the approach to an Enhanced Community Paramedicine Program with provincial funding as outlined in the report from the Commissioner of Health, listed on the April 8, 2021 Regional Council agenda, titled “Building an Enhanced Community Paramedicine Program in Peel”, be endorsed;

And further, that a \$3,000,000 increase to the expenditures and revenue of the 2021 operating budget for Paramedic Services be approved.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Ontario’s health care system is challenged by increasing demands and pressures, characterized by overcrowded emergency departments and growing waitlists for long-term care (LTC) homes. Investments in enhanced community care services can enable seniors to age in place with needed supports, and address capacity challenges placing strain on local health care systems.
- Community paramedicine (CP) programs offer an expanded primary care role for paramedics to help address health system pressures and contribute to overall system efficiency. There has been growing interest in CP programs by the provincial government, and by municipal paramedic services and their health system partners across Ontario, including Peel. Based on available provincial funding, Peel Paramedic Services has implemented select CP programs over the last several years, with promising results.
- New provincial funding of \$9.75 million, announced in 2021 and available for use until March 31, 2024, provides an opportunity for Paramedic Services to expand region-wide baseline programming targeted at individuals on the LTC waitlist and individuals eligible, or soon to be eligible for the waitlist. This expansion will enable improved capacity to respond to emerging health needs of residents.
- Leveraging ongoing provincial funding for the next four years, Paramedic Services will build an enhanced community paramedicine program, as part of a comprehensive wraparound care model for Peel’s seniors. This ‘made in Peel’ approach will be developed in partnership with local system stakeholders, including the Region of Peel’s Seniors Services Development division, and be seamlessly integrated with efforts to coordinate care through the Peel Integrated Care model at the Seniors Health and Wellness Village at Peel Manor.
- Throughout program development and implementation, Region of Peel Paramedic Services will build on current metrics and provincial reporting frameworks to inform longer term service planning, and ensure continued value and improved health

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outcomes for Peel's seniors and the local health system, contributing to the Region's vision to achieve a community for life.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

Ontario's health care system is in a state of transformation with overcrowded emergency departments and a rapidly aging population that is increasing demand for health services, as driving factors. Moving care upstream and investing in enhanced supports in the community that enable people to age safely in place for as long as possible are central to provincial efforts to address 'hallway health care' and alleviate capacity challenges in LTC and hospitals.

CP programs offer an expanded role for paramedics to address health system pressures and contribute to overall system efficiency, over and above conventional emergency 9-1-1 response. 'Community paramedicine' refers to a range of interventions that leverage paramedics' training and skills to deliver community-based care in collaboration with integrated care teams (e.g. assessment and referral, home visiting, wellness clinics). Community paramedicine programs can also play a role in alleviating increasing emergency call volumes, as fewer individuals will seek emergency care if they are adequately supported in the community.

In 2014, the province recognized the potential benefits of CP programs and funded several pilot projects to evaluate and gather additional evidence. In 2017, the government committed six million dollars annually to Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) for CP program delivery in collaboration with municipalities, paramedic service providers and other local health care partners. To further guide the work, the province released a Community Paramedicine program development framework to support local program planning, implementation and evaluation when considering the role of community paramedicine in addressing community needs within the context of broader health system.

With widespread recognition of the important role that paramedics can play in health system transformation and a growing body of evidence demonstrating that CP programs are a value-added component to integrated community care, the province continues to provide funding to expand programming. The Region of Peel has engaged in CP programming in limited ways over the past several years and welcomes the opportunity to expand CP programming as the Province introduces new funding opportunities.

2. Status of Community Paramedicine in Peel

In 2008, Peel Paramedic Services began an 'assess and refer' program called 'Community Referrals by Emergency Medical Services' ('CREMS') that connects select 9-1-1 patients who may benefit from additional community supports, to LHIN Home and Community Care Services. The CREMS program aims to identify and connect at-risk patients to home and community care service supports, while also potentially reducing call volumes and preventing repeat 9-1-1 calls. The program continues to be delivered at no additional cost to the Region and resulted in almost 600 referrals to home and community care in 2020.

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Since 2018, Peel Paramedic Services has operated seniors' wellness clinics (CP@clinic) in partnership with Peel Living (Region of Peel's non-profit housing corporation), McMaster University and the Mississauga-Halton LHIN which aim to improve the health of low-income residents in seniors' buildings through weekly voluntary drop-in wellness clinics. The program currently operates at five Peel Living buildings in Mississauga with 100 per cent funding through the Mississauga-Halton LHIN. By March 2020 the CP@clinic had enrolled 400 seniors before being suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Continued funding for CP@clinic is anticipated to extend into 2021-2022.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Paramedic Services also piloted a Mississauga-Halton LHIN-funded home visiting program (CP@home) from January to March 2020. Through CP@home, community paramedics visited the homes of frequent 9-1-1 callers to conduct assessments, provide health education, and refer individuals to existing community services. While funded externally, these CP programs have also leveraged existing Paramedic Service resources by providing meaningful work for paramedics on modified duties.

Over the course of the past year, Paramedic Services has responded quickly to emerging needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating the additional value to the system through integration and partnership. Working collaboratively with system partners through the Integrated Response Table, Paramedic Services has redeployed paramedic crews to deliver time-sensitive responses to the pandemic, such as test swabbing (community and congregate settings, and vulnerable populations), providing resources and mental health support to vulnerable and homeless individuals at the isolation site, as well as other supports for internal and external partners. Peel's paramedics continue to play an important role in COVID-19 response and will be supporting mobile vaccinations as a component of the Region's mass vaccination strategy.

a. Emerging Provincial Community Paramedicine Programs

The Ontario government and Ontario Health are prioritizing enhanced home and community care during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect seniors and ease pressures on the LTC home and acute care sectors. To this end, the provincial government is investing in the expansion of CP programming through two funding streams aimed at supporting seniors in the community who are most at risk of calling 9-1-1 or hospitalization, and to seniors who are eligible for, or waitlisted for an LTC bed.

High Intensity Supports at Home Program: In November 2020, Paramedic Services was approved for short-term Ministry of Health funding through the 'High Intensity Supports at Home' program, for community paramedics to provide specialized supports to high-risk seniors living across all of Peel. Paramedic Services was funded \$158,320 to work in partnership with the Mississauga-Halton and Central West LHINs and other Ontario Health Team (OHT) partners, including the Region of Peel's Seniors Services Development Division to provide wraparound coordinated care planning and delivery. At the time of writing this report, this funding was slated to expire at the end of March 2021.

Community Paramedicine for Long Term Care (CPLTC): In March 2021, Paramedic Services was approved for \$9.75 million over four years to enhance CP programming and support seniors waitlisted for LTC, and those eligible or soon to be eligible for LTC. Commencing in spring 2021, CPLTC program will build from the client-base and

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experience from the High Intensity Supports at Home program and once fully operational the services will include but not be limited to:

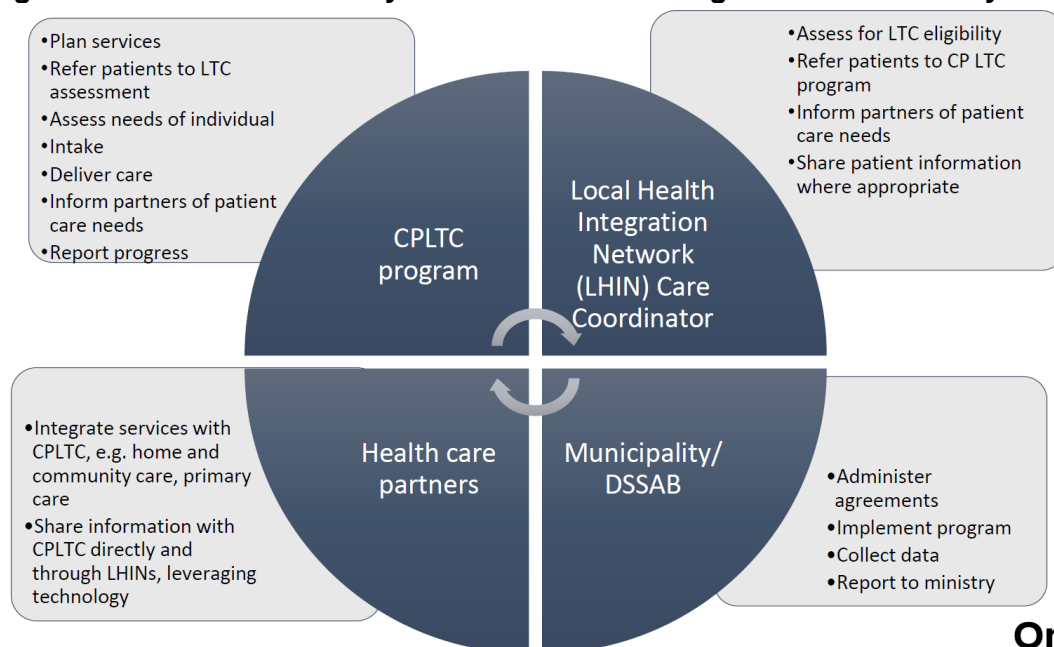
- Access to health services, through in-home and remote methods, such as online or virtual supports, working towards the provision of 24/7 care;
- Non-emergency home visits and in-home testing procedures;
- Ongoing monitoring of changing or escalating conditions to prevent or reduce emergency incidents;
- Additional education about healthy living and managing chronic diseases; and,
- Connections for participants and their families to home and community supports.

Both programs provide an opportunity to enhance and improve CP programming as a component of Peel's integrated care model and expand the vital role that paramedics can play in comprehensive, wraparound care for seniors. Medical oversight for new CP programs will be provided by Dr. S. Saha, Senior Medical Director for Long-Term Care, Seniors Services Development and Community Paramedicine.

3. Building a Regionalized CP Program in Peel

Paramedic Services is leveraging recent provincial CP funding to build a sustainable program as part of overall service planning. Key objectives to guide the planning will ensure that community paramedicine in Peel is responsive to evolving community need and based on the best available evidence. In addition, the Region will work collaboratively with local OHTs, both LHINs that serve Peel and other health system partners, to fill health system gaps across all of Peel and contribute to integrated care for vulnerable seniors. Figure 1 below, created by the Ministry of Long-Term Care, depicts how the new CPLTC program will intersect with broader coordinated care planning to ensure eligible seniors receive the care they need. These roles and partnerships are central to the success and design of Peel's CP programming.

Figure 1. Roles in Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care delivery



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Paramedic Services' current work with the Peel Integrated Care team at the Seniors Health and Wellness Village is a first step towards designing seamless integration with Regional programs and enhanced service delivery for seniors. Additional details about these collaborative efforts are included in the report and accompanying presentation titled, "Seniors Health and Wellness Village at Peel Manor – Program and Advocacy Update", also on the April 8, 2021 Regional Council agenda. This work is in alignment with the Region's Term of Council Priority 'To 'enhance seniors' supports and services' and create a community for life'.

To support and refine program development, Paramedic Services will build on current metrics and provincial reporting frameworks to inform longer term service planning. This will include the application of the Quadruple Aim framework for high performing health systems (better patient and population health outcomes; better patient, family and caregiver experience; better provider experience; better value), to ensure a value and benefit for Peel residents.

4. Opportunities and Next Steps in Peel

Peel's experience with CP programs to date and the recent response to COVID-19 have in its own ways demonstrated the potential for Paramedic Services to address health needs of targeted populations and to improve health system efficiency and effectiveness.

Working collaboratively with health system partners, The Region of Peel's CP Program will continue to assess its commitments in terms of meeting the following outcomes:

- contributing to a locally-driven integrated care model for seniors, that supports the Region and Ontario Health Team's shared vision for comprehensive wraparound care;
- responding to emerging needs and improve health outcomes for underserved populations and those experiencing barriers to service;
- increasing health system efficiency through programs that supplement and address gaps in the local health system (including growing ambulance call volume); and,
- improving provider (paramedic) satisfaction and engagement.

Recent provincial funding commitments, including the 'Community Paramedicine for LTC' and the 'High Intensity Supports at Home' programs demonstrate the Ontario government's recognition of the potential for CP programs to reduce pressure on other parts of the health system and support seniors to age in place safely. While the province has not committed to funding beyond 2024 at this time, it is anticipated that current pilot programs will inform the provincial approach to CP over the longer term. Leveraging this new funding, Paramedic Services, in partnership with the Region of Peel's Seniors Services Development division and local health system partners, will build an enhanced 'made in Peel' Community Paramedicine program that meets community need and is seamlessly integrated with other coordinated care efforts.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

Paramedic Services' development of a Regionalized CP program reflects a broader shift for community supports by paramedic services across Ontario, as well as provincial government and sector leadership efforts to modernize service delivery through health system

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transformation. Paramedic Services will manage its CP program in close partnership with local health system partners and ministry funders, applying best practices and innovations based on research evidence.

As Paramedic Services works towards building out the staff complement for enhanced CP programming, while also managing increasing call volumes, staff will continue to prioritize 9-1-1 response and ensure that staffing for CP programming does not negatively impact capacity for emergency response.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Enhanced CP programming will have no net financial impact for the Region at this time, as the \$9.75 million program is 100 per cent funded by the Ministry of Long-Term Care through to March 31, 2024. The new funding requires that the 2021 budgeted expenditures and revenues for Paramedic Services be increased by \$3 million. Over the next three years, the operating budget will include \$3 million for 2022 and \$3 million for 2023 with the remaining \$750 thousand in 2024.

Over the longer term, provincial funding for Peel's CP program is critical to program sustainability and capacity to respond flexibly to changing local health system and population health needs.

CONCLUSION

The Region of Peel's Paramedics have long been advocates for this much anticipated opportunity to enhance CP programming locally. New provincial funding will enable Paramedic Services to expand the reach of existing programming, offering greatly needed medical services to vulnerable seniors that enable aging at home safely for as long as possible. Expanded CP programming will play a vital role in achieving the shared vision of the Region and local Ontario Health Teams to deliver comprehensive wraparound care, comparable to that provided in long term care homes.

For further information regarding this report, please contact Peter F. Dundas, Chief and Director, Peel Regional Paramedic Services, Ext. 3921, peter.dundas@peelregion.ca.

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