
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report EMS-01-2023 Community Paramedic Program Enhancements – Facilities, Equipment and Staffing



For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 28, 2023

OBJECTIVE:

To obtain approval to reallocate Community Paramedic funds provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, (MOHLTC) for capital purchases, and to add 1 FTE for temporary Divisional Support Staff to the Community Paramedic program to be funded by the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant – LHIN, now known as Ontario West, to the 2023 Tax Supported Operating Budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report EMS-01-2023 Community Paramedic Program Enhancements – Facilities, Equipment and Staffing be received;
2. AND THAT the revisions to the MOHLTC Community Paramedic – Long-Term Care Funding allocation as outlined in Report EMS-01-2023 be approved;
3. AND THAT the budget adjustments as outlined in Report EMS-01-2023 for Community Paramedic – Long Term Care be approved;
4. AND THAT the 2023 Tax Supported Capital Budget be amended to include the purchase of two (2) Community Paramedic Vehicles, a Trailer, diagnostic equipment, and office equipment for new staff at a total cost of \$311,800 with 100% of the cost being covered by the MOHLTC Community Paramedic Funding;
5. AND THAT the 2023 Tax Supported Operating Budget include a one-time Council-approved initiative to add a Temporary 1.0 FTE Divisional Support Staff, at an estimated cost of \$53,800 with 100% of the cost being covered by the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant – LHIN, Ontario West Community Paramedic Funding.

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Respectfully submitted: Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager of Community & Development Services

Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff are seeking approval for adjustment of the current 2022-23 Community Paramedic (CP) budget which is 100% funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) for the purchase of 2 additional Community Paramedic Vehicles, a trailer (which would carry equipment and supplies for Community Paramedic events within the community), an increase to Medical Equipment for cardiac monitors that have been purchased, and office equipment, e.g. Laptop to support a temporary Divisional Support position. The MOHLTC has already approved the recommended reallocation and associated purchases. Haldimand County has also received the approval to utilize existing Provincial funding for an additional Temporary Divisional Support Staff for the 2023-24

Community Paramedic Program (CP). Staff are seeking Council's approval to reallocate some of the existing CP funds to allow for the capital purchases and operating increases noted. The existing funds available to the County are sufficient to cover all capital and operating expenses associated with the request.

BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County Paramedic Services (HCPS) is one of many Paramedic Services in the province of Ontario that currently has a temporary Community Paramedicine Program, which offers specific support for vulnerable residents. Community Paramedicine is recognized internationally as a best practise to help manage increased demands for paramedic services, as well as the demand on hospital visits and therefore, decreasing the need for "Hallway Medicine". This is done through paramedic visits taking place at the source of the need, e.g. This is done through paramedic visits taking place at the source of the need (the patient's home). This service approach has demonstrated benefits of reduced emergency calls, emergency department visits and hospitalizations; demand for long-term care beds; and, increase in overall patient well-being and satisfaction.

In December of 2020, Emergency Services staff brought forward Report EMS-04-2020 Temporary Community Paramedic Program, which was approved by Council and was supposed to end March 31, 2021. Due to the success of the program, and the fact that the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Ontario West observed the need for this program to continue, a budget was requested of the province to continue the program and was subsequently granted to March 31, 2022. A further budget allocation was provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to extend the program to March 31, 2024.

Currently, Haldimand County's Community Paramedic programs have a roster of 185 clients. Over and above the 185 clients, staff provide Wellness Clinics where Haldimand County residents are seen once a month. Currently, staff have a total of 150 regular attendees at those clinics. Haldimand County's Community Paramedic Program also has a Wellness Dog program that is one-of-a-kind and the first to be offered in North America, with many Community Paramedic Services reaching out for information as they attempt to replicate the program within their jurisdictions. The program currently has 4 dogs who, with the Community Paramedics (CPs), visit vulnerable residents in their homes providing care and companionship, which has proven to benefit the resident's overall health, both mentally and physically. The Wellness Dogs are also used to comfort first responders, hospital staff, and County staff, during traumatic times when support is required, as well as routine visits.

All of the above noted program elements are fully funded by the province. The funding received has been sufficient to meet all the program needs and there are ample funds available to allow for additional supports and enhancements. The proposed use of those additional funds is the focus of this staff report. While the current program is a success, and staff are meeting current client needs, growth of the program has led to a shortfall of vehicles and equipment. In addition, the growth of the program has resulted in a large amount of administrative burden that is placed upon the CPs which takes them away from what their core duties were to be (e.g. servicing clients). As a result of these things, and given the availability of funds, staff is proposing a series of capital and operating expenditures from the allocated Provincial funding. These expenditures—which are described in the Analysis section—have received the support of the primary funder (Province) in writing.

ANALYSIS:

Haldimand County Paramedic Services (HCPS), has taken an active role in developing, monitoring, and progressing the Temporary Community Paramedic role, ensuring its success, and demonstrating the continued need which is funded by the LHIN Ontario West, the Health Unit, and the MOHLTC

respectively. As the program has grown, equipment and supports have become a challenge. The below analysis examines these challenges along with proposed solutions in the areas of equipment/vehicles and staff.

Equipment/Vehicles

Currently, the Community Paramedic Program has four (4) dedicated vehicles for the Community Paramedics to visit clients, attend Wellness Clinics, vaccination clinics, and transport the dogs. Two (2) vehicles were purchased through the initial funding provided by the MOHLTC and two (2) are rented with an annual cost of approximately \$50,400. As part of the budget amendment proposal pre-approved by the MOHLTC, staff requested the purchase of two (2) more vehicles to replace the current rentals, still maintaining a total fleet of 4. This would result in all vehicles owned by the County and retrofitted to meet the needs of the Community Paramedic Program, as currently the rentals cannot. It is important to know that once these vehicles have reached their useful life, the County is not obligated to replace them as these Capital expenditures were a result of a grant. This includes all Capital costs within the report. Replacement of the vehicles and equipment will be determined at the time of need and if the Community Paramedic Program continues to be funded.

The total cost for both Community Paramedic vehicles would be \$210,000, which includes the purchase of the vehicle and the retrofitting of the specific options within the unit to make them safe for transporting equipment, supplies and the dogs. Included with the retrofit will be 2 x K9 Cages which are designed to properly carry and restrain canines in vehicles. This is the same type of storage Police K9 vehicles are retrofitted with. This will mean 3 vehicles for the Community Paramedics and 1 vehicle for the Community Paramedic supervisor, who is required to maintain client communication, quality assurance visits, and participate in Wellness Clinics, as well as his/her regular duties.

As part of the budget amendment proposal to the Ministry, staff requested \$15,000 in funds to purchase an enclosed trailer to move supplies, and equipment, which includes tents, chairs, medical equipment, static displays, etc. when we attend Wellness Clinics, as well as public relation events as part of the program. The trailer will also be used for the Bike Medic Team that is active in the summer at special events, providing coverage and response. Currently, there is no logistics apparatus to move these types of items, staff are using the current Community Paramedic and first response vehicles, which are not retrofitted for this type of transport.

Within the proposed budget adjustment is \$81,800 which was due to the purchase of 2 additional Cardiac Monitors used by Community Paramedics to monitor heart rhythms, take vitals, and if required, to respond to medical calls if the Community Paramedics are required due to lack of emergency vehicles, or the client required on scene emergency care. These monitors have already been purchased and are being added to the 2022-2023 approved budget at the request of the MOHLTC.

In total, the amount for equipment and vehicles—all funded from existing Provincial allocations—would be \$306,800. If Provincial funding were to cease, the County would retain ownership of all the above capital purchases for continued use in the CP program (should it continue with Council's support and funding) or to be absorbed into the regular paramedic service program (should the CP program not continue).

Office Equipment

With the approval of a Divisional Support position to assist with the administrative duties generated by the Community Paramedic Program, the Divisional Support position will require a work station. Currently there is a desk available, however, a laptop will be required to complete the duties of this position at a cost of \$5,000, which is also 100% covered by the provincial funding.

With the office equipment, total Capital expenditures would be \$311,800.

Wellness Dog Program Expansion

Due to the success of our Wellness Dog Program staff asked the MOHLTC to support an increase of \$8,200. This will allow the County to expand the program within the community by increasing visits, and client interactions. This will be captured in the Operating Impacts.

Support Staff

Haldimand County has also received the approval from the province to request the funding of an additional FTE for Temporary Divisional Support Staff to the CP program. This staff member would alleviate the challenges of completing the everyday administrative work required, which includes scheduling of clients, client intake, invoice processing, data entry, etc., from the Community Paramedics and the CP supervisors. This would allow them to manage an increased client load as required.

As stated, all proposed budget items, including the addition of the Temporary Divisional Support Position have been approved by the program funders—MOHLTC and HNHB LHIN, Ontario West—prior to this report coming forward to Council, to ensure the reallocation of provided funds is allowed.

Future of Program/Funding

As noted, a number of times in this report, the CP program is 100% funded by external parties and that funding is only guaranteed until March 31, 2024. Staff have been in regular communication with Ministry of Health staff to stress the importance of this program in the County, to describe its success and positive health impacts. The Ministry has acknowledged the importance of this program in the County and has regularly encouraged Emergency Services to grow and support the program. All indications are that funding will be extended, and potentially made permanent for this program in the near future. However, there is no guarantee of that and so contingency planning is necessary. In that regard, if funding were to cease, the County would have to decide on whether to terminate the program, fund the current program 'as is' or fund a modified (scaled down) version of the program. That decision is not necessary for Council at this time but staff will be developing the details around each of these options for Council to consider in future should it be required.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The MOHLTC approved 2022-23 allocation for the Haldimand County Community Paramedic – Long-Term Care program is \$1,629,400. The table below outlines the previously intended allocation of these funds, and the proposed revision:

	2022-23 Approved Community Paramedic LTC program	Revised 2022-23 Community Paramedic LTC program Budget
OPERATING:		
Expenditures		
Operating Expenses	1,533,900	1,222,100
Total Operating Expenditures	1,533,900	1,222,100
Funding		
Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care	(1,458,900)	(1,207,100)
Total Funding	(1,458,900)	(1,207,100)
CAPITAL:		
Expenditures		

Medical Equipment	50,000	131,800
Computers, telephones, database licenses	45,500	50,500
Vehicles		225,000
Total Capital Expenditures	95,500	407,300
Funding		
Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care	(170,500)	(422,300)
Total Funding	(170,500)	(422,300)
Total Operating & Capital Funding	(1,629,400)	(1,629,400)

The addition of 1 FTE Temporary Divisional Support Staff requires the following change to the 2023 Draft Tax Supported Operating Budget, and it will be brought forward as a Council-approved one-time initiative as per the report's recommendation:

	Current 2023 Community Paramedic Program	Additional of 1 FTE Division Support Staff	Proposed 2023 Community Paramedic Program
OPERATING:			
Expenditures			
Salaries/Benefits	106,390	53,800	160,190
Total Operating Expenditures	106,390	53,800	160,190
Funding			
HNHB LHIN	(106,390)	(53,800)	(160,190)
Total Funding	(106,390)	(53,800)	(160,190)

The total revision to the approved 2023 Tax-Supported Capital Budget, including the computer purchase related to the staffing position, is outlined below:

	2023 Approved Budget	Proposed Revision	Revised 2023 Budget
Capital Expenditures:			
Community Paramedic Units – EMS (2) – Fleet Project	\$0	\$210,000	\$210,000
Trailer – Community Paramedic Program – Fleet Project	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000
541015 – LTC Program – Medical Equipment (2022)	\$0	\$81,800	\$81,800
136001 – Endpoint Computing	\$89,600	\$5,000	\$94,600
Total Capital Expenditures:	\$89,600	\$311,800	\$401,400
Financing - MOHLTC:			
Community Paramedic Units – EMS (2) – Fleet Project	\$0	\$210,000	\$210,000

Trailer – Community Paramedic Program – Fleet Project	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000
541015 – LTC Program – Medical Equipment (2022)	\$0	\$81,800	\$81,800
136001 – Endpoint Computing	\$89,600	\$5,000	\$94,600
Total Financing:	\$89,600	\$311,800	\$401,400

It is important to note that any expenditures related to this program are currently 100% funded, and if this program is to continue in future years, operating costs and capital-related expenditures may result in tax levy impacts should funding no longer be available.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Not applicable.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

ATTACHMENTS:

None.