

**Subject: Ottawa Paramedic Service 2021 and 2022 Annual Report**

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**Report to Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee on 15  
June 2023**

**and Council 28 June 2023**

**Submitted on June 6, 2023 by Pierre Poirier, Chief, Ottawa Paramedic Service**

**Contact Person: Manon Lavergne, Program Manager, Operational Support  
Services, Ottawa Paramedic Service**

**613-580-2424, ext. 28988, [Manon.Lavergne@ottawa.ca](mailto:Manon.Lavergne@ottawa.ca)**

**Ward: Citywide**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report summarizes the Ottawa Paramedic Service's activities and service delivery from 2021 and 2022, and highlights service demand and performance trends. As well, this report fulfills the requirement under the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee Terms of Reference for the Ottawa Paramedic Service to prepare an annual report.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service provides patient care and emergency medical coverage to more than one million residents of the nation's capital across 2,800 square kilometres while the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre receives emergency medical calls through 9-1-1 and dispatches paramedic resources across 10,000 square kilometres of eastern Ontario. The Ottawa Paramedic Service is a team of dedicated and qualified professionals who deliver high quality care and services to the individuals and communities they serve.

Over the past three years, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to evolve, as was experienced with the emergence of the Omicron variant in late 2022. Pre-existing issues affecting all parts of Ontario's healthcare system have been

exacerbated by COVID-19, and the impacts to the Ottawa Paramedic Service and its staff have been significant. Staff have had to continuously adapt to a rapidly changing situation and have experienced significant adjustments in their everyday roles and responsibilities.

In 2021 and 2022, paramedic response volume returned to a pre-pandemic state of year-over-year increases. This can be attributed to population growth, an aging patient demographic, more complex medical conditions, and the ongoing effects that COVID-19 continues to have on health care. And while the issue of hospital offload delay predates the pandemic, COVID-19 has caused major disruptions, backlogs in non-emergent care, and shortages in health human resources. This has had a trickle-down effect on other health care services, including paramedics. Over the last two years, the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre has also experienced a significant increase in calls to 9-1-1. This is consistent with an overall increase in the Service's response volume.

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service spent an exceptional amount of time in offload delay at Ottawa hospitals and experienced an unprecedented number of level zero events. This is largely due to the current state of the healthcare system in Ontario and across Canada. As a result, in 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service did not meet the Council approved percentile rank for CTAS 1 (life threatening), CTAS 2 (urgent) and sudden cardiac arrest patients. Further, the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre did not meet Ministry of Health established call processing times for CTAS 1 and CTAS 2 patients.

Over the past two years, the Ottawa Paramedic Service has worked swiftly and collaboratively with Ottawa hospitals and other stakeholders to implement several mitigation strategies to minimize the impacts of offload delay and reduce occurrences of level zero. The Service has leveraged new patient models of care approved by the Ministry of Health aimed at diverting select patient populations away from emergency departments and enabling paramedics to provide appropriate community-based care. This is consistent with the ongoing evolution of the paramedic role which, over many years now, has shifted from an emergency-based response to a more creative, patient and community-centered approach. For example, community paramedics extend the paramedic's role beyond traditional emergency response that has materialized as a result of the changing needs of our communities and the increasing demand for accessible and comprehensive health care services. The role of the community paramedic is evolving worldwide, filling gaps in the healthcare system, and addressing the unmet health needs of the community and particularly vulnerable populations.

However, as successful as these programs are, there is no legislative or policy framework to support them or permanent funding available from the Province.

The steady increases in response volume, offload delay, and level zero events, along with other issues in health care are creating significant challenges for the Service and its staff. Despite difficult times, staff remain committed to meeting the needs of the communities they serve.

As described throughout this report, the Ottawa Paramedic Service continues to respond and adapt to the local needs of its residents through the delivery of new and existing initiatives aimed at improving patient care and advancing mental supports for staff.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE OTTAWA PARAMEDIC SERVICE**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service provides patient care and emergency medical coverage to more than one million residents of the nation's capital. The Ottawa Paramedic Service is a team of dedicated and qualified professionals who deliver high quality care and services to the individuals and communities they serve. This team includes Paramedics, Ambulance Communications Officers, Equipment and Supply Technicians, Educators, Trainers, Quality Assurance staff, and support staff.

Specialty teams include marine paramedics on waterways, tactical paramedics supporting police operations, and bike paramedics for special events. In addition to responding to medical emergencies, the Ottawa Paramedic Service provides home-based health care to patients with complex medical needs through various Community Paramedic Programs. The Service, in partnership with The Ottawa Hospital, also provides community-based mental health care through the Mental Wellbeing Response Team. The Ottawa Paramedic Service delivers public education programs for City staff and stakeholders, manages medical equipment purchases for the City, and oversees the Public Access Defibrillator Program, which places Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) in public and private buildings.

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING**

Ontario's Emergency Health Services branch of the Ministry of Health is responsible for emergency medical (paramedic) services. The Ambulance Act, its regulations and standards, form the legal framework for the Ottawa Paramedic Service and the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre. The Ottawa Paramedic Service is a

designated delivery agent for the provision of land ambulance services across the city of Ottawa. Together, the Ministry of Health and the City of Ottawa are responsible for ensuring that patient care and ambulance transportation are carried out effectively. The Ottawa Paramedic Service is singularly responsible for supervising staff, maintaining vehicles and equipment, and assuring the quality of service delivery. The Service has a shared funding model for the land ambulance service which is equally 50 per cent funding by the Ministry of Health and the city of Ottawa.

All land ambulance services must be certified by the Ministry to operate in the province. Certified ambulance service operators must undergo a Ministry-led peer recertification process every three years, before their existing certificate has expired. This process confirms that the operator meets compliance with legislated land certification standards, as applicable. In 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service successfully met the legislated requirements for recertification as a land ambulance operator in the province of Ontario and has been recertified until November 4, 2025.

The Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre receives emergency medical calls through 9-1-1 and dispatches paramedic resources across 10,000 square kilometres of eastern Ontario including Ottawa, the United Counties of Prescott-Russell, and the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry including the city of Cornwall. While the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre is 100 per cent funded by the Ministry of Health, the Ottawa Paramedic Service is responsible for staffing, administration, reporting, and operational functions, including the provision of ambulance communications services across eastern Ontario. A Transfer Payment Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the Ministry of Health outlines these terms and conditions in detail and has been in place since December 2002.

Every three years, ambulance communications services in Ontario must undergo a Quality Assurance Review to ensure they are complying with their performance agreements and legislation. A review of the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre is scheduled for November 2023.

## **OTTAWA PARAMEDIC SERVICE VISION, MISSION, AND STRATEGIC GOALS**

In 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service developed a new Vision and Mission statement as follows:

Vision Statement: A professional and sustainable paramedic service that supports our people and delivers high-quality services in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Mission Statement: To deliver high-quality care that meets the diverse and changing needs of the individuals and communities we serve and improve the staff and paramedic experience.

As well, the Service adopted the following four strategic goals:

1. To deliver clinical excellence
2. To enhance our safe workplace
3. To improve operational efficiency
4. To develop career paths in our Service

As well, there are three cross-cutting themes that interact with each of these goals:

- Communication: Ensuring open and frequent communication throughout the Service.
- Technology: Leveraging information technology and the use of digital tools.
- Culture: Creating a positive workplace with shared values, beliefs and norms.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service's strategic goals align with the Quadruple Aim, an internationally recognized framework that aspires to deliver an effective health care system. The Quadruple Aim is the guiding framework for Ontario Health, an agency created by the Government of Ontario to connect, coordinate, and modernize our Province's health care system. The four objectives of the Quadruple Aim, a term coined by Thomas Bodenheimer, MD, in a 2014 [Annals of Family Medicine](#) paper, are:

- Enhancing patient experience
- Improving population health
- Reducing the per capita cost of health care
- Improving the work life of health care providers

Collectively, the Vision statement, Mission statement, and strategic goals provide the Ottawa Paramedic Service and its staff an overall sense of direction and assist the organization in establishing short and long-term priorities.

This report fulfills the requirement under the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee Terms of Reference for the Ottawa Paramedic Service to prepare an annual report detailing current levels of service and identify any need or method improvement to Council. The Service also reports annually to the Ministry of Health on response time performance through a separate reporting process. This report highlights service demand, performance trends, programs, and service delivery in 2021 and 2022.

## **DISCUSSION**

## **IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES**

Over the past three years, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to evolve and the impact to the Ottawa Paramedic Service has been significant. Despite the adversity caused by the pandemic, the past two years have provided new opportunities for collaboration and teamwork within the Service, across the corporation, and with external partners.

In 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Public Health, and other healthcare partners worked together to provide approximately 2.2 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to protect Ottawa residents from illness and hospitalization. More than 53,000 vaccines were administered by paramedics alone. Further, in 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service hosted more than 190 mobile vaccination clinics in long-term care, retirement homes, and other congregate living settings.

On November 3, 2021, the Ministry of Health released updated recommendations for third (booster) doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for healthcare workers. In collaboration with Ottawa Public Health and The Ottawa Hospital, in November and December, the Ottawa Paramedic Service hosted several COVID-19 booster clinics at Paramedic Headquarters for staff and their families, in conjunction with the annual Influenza Immunization Program, which has been in place for more than 11 years. Staff administered 1,022 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and 463 influenza vaccinations at these clinics. Influenza vaccines were provided at no cost through the Province's Universal Influenza Immunization Program.

The evolving response to COVID-19 has resulted in frequent changes in public health measures and regulations. In 2021 and 2022, staff continued to experience significant adjustments in their everyday work including vaccination requirements, infection prevention and control measures, process changes for symptom screening, and the donning of enhanced personal protective equipment (PPE). In the face of a rapidly changing situation, the Service had to continuously adapt to protect staff and meet the needs of the community.

On August 17, 2021, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a new directive (Directive #6) requiring hospitals, home and community care service providers, and ambulance services to have a vaccination policy, with an implementation date of September 7, 2021. On September 7, the Ottawa Paramedic Service implemented a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy requiring all existing and future Ottawa Paramedic Service employees, contractors, volunteers, students, observers, and

tenants be fully vaccinated with a Health Canada approved COVID-19 vaccine, barring a legitimate medical exemption. Accordingly, all individuals requiring COVID-19 vaccination were vaccinated, including 100 per cent of active Ottawa Paramedic Service staff. On March 9, 2022, the Chief Medical Officer of Health announced that Directive #6 was being revoked, but reinforced vaccination as a cornerstone intervention for the ongoing protection against COVID-19 and strongly encouraged integrating COVID-19 vaccination policies into existing occupational health and safety policies and procedures. The Ottawa Paramedic Service maintains a COVID-19 vaccination policy for the ongoing protection of staff and members of the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for personal protective equipment worldwide which presented new challenges for the Ottawa Paramedic Service. N95 masks are the standard face mask used by paramedics for respiratory protection. They are portable, easy to use, and capable of filtering very small particulate matter, offering universal protection for all types of viruses. In 2020, due to a global shortage of personal protective equipment, with approval from the Ministry of Labour, the Ottawa Paramedic Service had no choice but to use recently expired N95 respirator masks. In 2021 and 2022, the Service was able to secure an adequate supply of N95 masks for staff with a stockpile of 90 days.

Further, when treating patients with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, paramedics must wear enhanced personal protective equipment which includes N95 masks, goggles, level 3 gowns, and gloves in addition to a base layer of clothing (duty shirt). As they can be 'gowned up' for extensive periods of time (up to several hours) and often required to work outdoors, in 2021, paramedics were provided with dry-wicking t-shirts to wear in place of their duty shirt to help regulate their internal body temperature when working in warm weather.

In December 2022, the public health situation in Ottawa began to change rather quickly with the emergence of the new, highly transmissible Omicron variant. The Ottawa Paramedic Service began seeing a significant increase in the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in the community as well as within our Service. This was consistent across Ontario and Canada. To mitigate potential service impacts, the Ottawa Paramedic Service maintained existing measures established at the onset of the pandemic, implemented a work self-isolation program, and worked with Ottawa Public Health and other partners to institute enhanced infection control measures in the workplace. This aided in the Service's ability to maintain regular service levels to the community in 2021 and early 2022, despite Omicron. Further, Community Paramedics played a significant role in outbreak management for COVID-19 at long-term care

homes, nursing homes, retirement homes, and other congregate living settings in Ottawa.

In early 2022, the Ontario government discontinued various public health measures aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19 in the community. Despite this, healthcare professionals continued to experience the negative effects of COVID-19. Later that year, the ongoing effects of COVID-19 were compounded by the surge of respiratory illnesses in the community, including Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and influenza. In 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service implemented the ID NOW™ COVID-19 rapid molecular test for staff for accurate and timely results. As well, a portable air purification unit (Sanuvox™) was procured and will be installed in the front cab and rear patient compartment on all next generation ambulances to provide greater safety for staff and patients.

It is possible that the coronavirus will never be eliminated, and it has become increasingly clear that the management and care of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses must be integrated into the Ottawa Paramedic Service's everyday practices to keep staff and patients safe, and to maintain service delivery to the community. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals across Canada were experiencing challenges regarding staffing and capacity. The pandemic has served to highlight and exacerbate these issues, which has had a downstream effect to other healthcare services, including paramedics. In addition to COVID-19, the Ottawa Paramedic Service's community service delivery continues to be challenged by offload delay at local hospitals, as well as a steady increase in response volume due to a growing population and an aging patient demographic.

## **PERFORMANCE TRENDS**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service takes pride in providing the best possible clinical care to residents of Ottawa. The Service regularly reviews and analyzes patient outcomes, response volumes, response times, and offload delay at local hospitals. The Service then adjusts service delivery to improve service to the community. The primary measures that determine service demand and associated resource requirements are:

- The total number of 9-1-1 calls received;
- The total number of patients assessed, treated, and transported;
- The total number of paramedic resources required to respond;
- The total time on task per response;



- The offload delay measurements;
- A quality review of patient care documentation; and
- The number of successful resuscitations.

### **Paramedic Response Volume**

A paramedic response is generated when an emergency response vehicle is assigned to a call by the Central Ambulance Communications Centre and travel begins. Some calls require more than one response (vehicle) depending on the complexity of the situation and the number of patients. Paramedic response volume is a measure of how many paramedic responses (vehicles) are assigned to calls.

In 2020, the Ottawa Paramedic Service response volume decreased by 9.5 per cent over the previous year. This is the first time that the Service has experienced a decrease in response volume since 2013 and can be attributed to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the stay-at-home order issued by the Ontario government. In 2021 and 2022, paramedic response volume returned to a pre-pandemic state of year-over-year increases. In 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service response volume was 149,344, representing a 12.6 per cent increase over 2020, and in 2022, response volume was 184,113, representing a 23.3 per cent increase over 2021.

Table 1 represents the response volume and the annual percentage growth over the last five years.

Table 1: Response volume and annual percentage growth from 2018 to 2022

<b>Year</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>% Change</b>
2018	144,309	3.4%
2019	146,621	1.6%
2020	132,631	-9.5%
2021	149,344	12.6%
2022	184,113	23.3%

Over the last two years, paramedic response volume increased by unprecedented increments as a result of several factors including population growth, an aging patient demographic, complex medical conditions, and pre-existing issues affecting Ontario's healthcare system which have been exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As such, in 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service experienced difficulty achieving legislated response time performance standards and Council-approved targets. The Service will require continued investment to address an ever-increasing response volume due to population growth and an aging patient demographic.

### **Paramedic Response Time Standards**

The legislated Ottawa Paramedic Service response time reporting framework is defined as the elapsed time from when the first paramedic unit is notified of the call for service to the arrival of a paramedic resource on scene (ambulance or single response unit). Response times across the province are measured and reported publicly on the Ministry of Health website.

Response time performance is based on the Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS), which sets a score for the patient acuity (severity of illness or injury). CTAS 1 is the highest acuity and CTAS 5 is the lowest. The Ministry of Health determines the response time for CTAS 1 patients while the response time target (percentile rank) is established by Ottawa City Council. The CTAS score can only be determined once a paramedic has arrived on scene and after a medical assessment has been performed. The percentages in Table 2 represent how often a paramedic unit has arrived on scene to provide service to patients within the established targeted response time for each CTAS category.

Table 2 outlines the Ottawa Paramedic Service's response time performance over the last five years.

Table 2: Response Time Performance from 2018 to 2022

Category (Acuity)	Target Time (minutes)	Council Approved Percentile	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CTAS 1 (Life Threatening)	8:00 <sup>1</sup>	75%	78.0%	75.1%	75.7%	66.8%	61.8%
CTAS 2 (Urgent)	10:00	75%	80.3%	77.2%	76.6%	71.2%	63.2%
CTAS 3	15:00	75%	91.5%	88.9%	89.1%	85.9%	76.3%
CTAS 4	20:00	75%	94.8%	93.5%	94.4%	92.1%	83.4%
CTAS 5	25:00	75%	96.6%	96.5%	96.6%	94.7%	86.7%

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service met the Council-approved percentile rank for CTAS 3, 4, and 5 categories for the fifth consecutive year. However, CTAS 1 and CTAS 2 benchmarks were not met for both 2021 and 2022. This can be attributed to a significant increase in response volume, unprecedented service impacts associated with COVID-19, and excessive offload delay at Ottawa hospitals, as described in this report.

**City of Ottawa Response Time Performance for Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

In cases of sudden cardiac arrest, response time is defined as the elapsed time from when the first paramedic unit is notified to the arrival of any person trained and equipped to provide defibrillation. The response time for sudden cardiac arrest is positively impacted if an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is available at the scene or by the arrival of a police officer, firefighter, or OC Transpo Security, who are each equipped with an AED in their vehicle.

Table 3 shows the City of Ottawa’s performance against the legislated response time standard and Council-approved percentile for sudden cardiac arrest.

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<sup>1</sup> Mandated by Provincial regulation

Table 3: Response Time Performance for Sudden Cardiac Arrest 2018 to 2022

Category	Target Time (minutes)	Council Approved Percentile	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	6:00 <sup>2</sup>	65%	73.2%	76.1%	77.3%	63.8%	48.4%

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service did not meet the legislated response time for sudden cardiac arrest. This can be attributed to the excessive amount of time the Ottawa Paramedic Service spent in offload delay at Ottawa hospitals, an increase in level zero events, and impacts associated with COVID-19. The number of individuals who suffered sudden cardiac arrest in 2021 and 2022 accounted for less than one percent of all patients cared for by the Service.

### **Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre System Performance**

The Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre receives and triages 9-1-1 calls and dispatches paramedic resources across 10,000 square kilometres of eastern Ontario.

In 2021, the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre answered 139,318 emergency calls which required 182,919 emergency vehicle responses, an increase of 9.6 per cent in vehicle responses from 2020. In 2022, the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre answered 148,132 emergency calls of which 213,865 emergency vehicle responses were required, an increase of 16.9 per cent in vehicle responses from 2021. Note that some emergency calls require more than one resource depending on the complexity of the situation and the number of patients.

The Ministry of Health establishes response time standards (call processing times) for all ambulance communications centres in Ontario. The response time standards are a measure of the elapsed time from when a call is received at the communications centre to when a paramedic unit has been notified of the emergency call. Communications centres must report annually to the Ministry of Health on the percentage of time this process is completed within two minutes.

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<sup>2</sup> Mandated by Provincial regulation

Table 4 demonstrates the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre call processing times for CTAS 1, CTAS 2, and sudden cardiac arrest patients over the last five years.

Table 4: Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre Call Processing Times 2018 to 2022

Category	Target Time (minutes)	Percentile	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CTAS 1 (Life Threatening)	2:00	80%	84.6%	82.5%	80.2%	74.0%	75.5%
CTAS 2 (Urgent)	2:00	75%	65.3%	63.2%	60.7%	52.5%	54.5%
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	2:00	80%	86.0%	86.3%	81.9%	77.1%	80.2%

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre did not meet call processing times for CTAS 1. This can be attributed to the significant increase in response volume over the past two years. Further, the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre did not meet call processing times for CTAS 2. This is consistent with performance outcomes for this category from previous years and can be attributed to the use of the Dispatch Priority Card Index, a slow and outdated call taking algorithm used by Ambulance Communications Officers for call prioritization.

There are only two ambulance call triage tools available for use by ambulance communications centres in Ontario: the Dispatch Priority Card Index and the Medical Priority Dispatch System. The Medical Priority Dispatch System is a world-wide industry best practice used in over seventy countries for call assessment and prioritization. The multi-dimensional nature of the algorithm provides a greater level of precision, accuracy and efficiency in medical triaging compared to the Dispatch Priority Card Index.

In 2001, the Ottawa Paramedic Service made a request to the Province of Ontario for the implementation of Medical Priority Dispatch System. In 2005, Coroner’s Jury regarding the death of Alice Martin recommended the Medical Priority Dispatch System be immediately implemented in Ottawa. Since then, the Ottawa Paramedic Service has maintained their advocacy for Medical Priority Dispatch System. On April 12, 2023, the

Province announced that the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre will receive Medical Priority Dispatch System in Q2 2024. The Medical Priority Dispatch System is significantly better than the Dispatch Priority Card Index at differentiating response requirements. This can assist the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre in meeting call processing times for all CTAS levels. Further, the Medical Priority Dispatch System will:

- Assist Ambulance Communications Officers in determining the appropriate response more quickly, assuring the best use of paramedic resources.
- Prioritize the most urgent calls, improving response times.
- Reduce the risk of under- and over-prioritizing calls, improving patient outcomes by having the appropriate resource(s) attached to the call for service.
- Help guide Ambulance Communications Officers in providing more accurate pre-arrival instructions to callers.

**Impact of Hospital Offload Delay on the Community**

Offload delay occurs when paramedics are not able to immediately transfer the care of a patient to hospital staff. Offload delay severely impacts the ability of the Ottawa Paramedic Service to respond to calls, as well as the Service’s compliance with response time standards. Excessive offload delay is a patient health and public safety risk.

The industry accepted performance target for Transfer of Care is within 30 minutes at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. More specifically, nine times out of 10, the paramedic aim is to transfer the care of a patient to hospital staff within 30 minutes so they can return to the community for service. As reflected in Table 5, emergency departments at all Ottawa hospitals are not meeting this performance target.

Table 5: 90th Percentile offload delay at emergency departments in Ottawa Hospitals in 2021 and 2022

Facility	90 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Transfer of Care (minutes) 2021	90 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Transfer of Care (minutes) 2022
The Ottawa Hospital – General Campus	85.70	162.72
The Ottawa Hospital – Civic	61.75	136.00

Campus		
Montfort Hospital	138.65	224.18
Queensway Carleton Hospital	103.00	167.84
Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario	32.04	39.10

In 2021, the Service expended 57,518 hours in offload delay in Ottawa hospitals and in 2022, the Service expended 93,686 hours in offload delay. This represents an average of over 512 hours of paramedic time that were lost per day in 2022 or the equivalent of 42 staff per day.

Offload delay is a complex, chronic, and systemic issue that has created challenges for paramedic services across Ontario and Canada for several years. The root causes are related to broader issues within the healthcare system such as patient volumes, the availability of beds, alternate level of care patients that remain in the hospital, surgical backlogs, access to primary care, and human health resource (staffing) pressures. While these issues reside with the Province of Ontario and remain outside the control of the City of Ottawa to resolve, offload delay is a risk to health and public safety and impedes the Ottawa Paramedic Service’s ability to meet legislative requirements and Council-approved targets. The Ottawa Paramedic Service continues to work collaboratively with Ottawa hospitals to implement mitigation strategies that mutually benefit each organization and patients alike.

**Level Zero**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service is at “level zero” when there are no ambulances available to transport a patient to hospital (as all ambulance crews are either on a call or in offload delay and therefore unavailable to respond to the next call in the community). Offload delay at local hospitals continues to be a significant contributor to ‘level zero’ events in Ottawa; however, the following factors may also contribute:

- Increased response volume
- Increased time on task for Ambulance Communications Officers (screening questions)
- Increased time on task for Paramedics (donning/doffing enhanced personal protective equipment)
- Availability of staff due to various leaves of absence
- Lack of alternate care destinations for patients (COVID-Assessment Centres, Mental Health Facilities)

Table 6: Level zero events and annual percentage growth 2019 to 2022

Year	Events	% Change
2019	571	N/A
2020	435	-23.8%
2021	719	65.3%
2022	1,806	151.2%

As outlined in Table 6, in 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service was at level zero 719 times for a total of 24,310 minutes. In 2022, there were 1,806 level zero events, more than double the events from the previous year, for a total of 73,060 minutes. The increase in level zero events is consistent with a significant increase in response volume and the unprecedented amount of time paramedics spent in hospital offload delay over the past two years.

The impact of offload delay and level zero on the community and staff of the Ottawa Paramedic Service is substantial. The Ottawa Paramedic Service continues to work with local hospitals and other partners to implement strategies to mitigate offload delay by reducing patient transports and diverting patients away from emergency departments, which can significantly reduce level zero events. Treating individuals in alternate care settings such as the community or their home can reduce visits to the emergency department, reduce repeat calls to 9-1-1, increase the availability of paramedics in the community, and provide individuals with better, more appropriate care. In 2021 and 2022, the Service continued to mature existing offload delay and level zero mitigation strategies.

## **MITIGATION STRATEGIES – PRE-EXISTING**

### **Paramedic Response Unit Program**

The Paramedic Response Unit is a vehicle staffed with a single paramedic that is strategically deployed in the city to provide a rapid response to emergency calls and initiate patient care. Upon arrival, the Paramedic Response Unit paramedic will assess the patient and confirm the requirement for an ambulance and its priority response or cancel the response by an ambulance crew. A Paramedic Response Unit does not transport patients to hospital and if transportation is not required, an ambulance remains



available in the community. If transportation is required, patient care is transferred to the ambulance crew and the Paramedic Response Unit becomes available again to respond to return to service in the community.

The Paramedic Response Unit model is an industry best practice that has been used in Ottawa for over 17 years. Traditionally, a Paramedic Response Unit is staffed with Primary Care Paramedics, whereas an ambulance is often staffed with an Advanced Care Paramedic and a Primary Care Paramedic. In 2021, many Advanced Care Paramedics were being held in hospital offload delay, reducing the number of Advanced Care Paramedics available to provide Advanced Life Support care in the community. To improve access to Advanced Life Support care, the Ottawa Paramedic Service has recently deployed Advanced Care Paramedics in the Paramedic Response Unit program.

### **Targeted Engagement Diversion Program**

The Targeted Engagement Diversion program is a successful partnership established in November 2011 between the Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Inner-City Health, the Shepherds of Good Hope, The Ottawa Hospital, and the Ottawa Police Service. The Targeted Engagement Diversion program works to identify and assist vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness who may suffer from a substance use disorder. Through the program, paramedics will transport an individual experiencing homelessness to a specialized medical clinic as an alternative to a hospital emergency department. The Targeted Engagement Diversion program continues to be a successful initiative in reducing emergency department utilization for a vulnerable population. Most Targeted Engagement Diversion patients are engaged in treatment and often move into a more stable housing situation. This unique initiative delivers an enhanced and specialized care while reducing the demand for the paramedic 9-1-1 service. In 2021 and 2022 combined, more than 1,440 individuals were diverted away from the emergency department through the Targeted Engagement Diversion program.

### **Vertical Patient ('Fit 2 Sit') Program**

The Vertical Patient Program was implemented in 2019 by the Ottawa Paramedic Service in partnership with The Ottawa Hospital and the Queensway Carleton Hospital. In 2022, the program was expanded to include all adult hospitals in Ottawa. Through the Vertical Patient Program, paramedics use specific medical assessment criteria to determine when a low acuity patient is able to sit and therefore be offloaded to the emergency department waiting room. Upon agreement with the hospital triage nurse, the patient transfer of care often occurs within 15 minutes. Through this process, a

paramedic crew may avoid excessive offload delay, which allows them return to service in the community.

In 2021 and 2022, more than a total of 2,148 patients met the 'Fit 2 Sit' criteria and were offloaded directly to the emergency department waiting room.

### **Dedicated Offload Nurse Program**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service continues to oversee the Dedicated Offload Nurse Program which is fully funded by the Province. The program was implemented in 2008 and is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, local hospitals, and the Ottawa Paramedic Service. This program permits paramedics to transfer patient care to a dedicated offload nurse or health professional including another paramedic within the hospital's emergency department. When the transfer of care process is expedited, a paramedic crew is able to return to service in the community.

In 2021, the Ministry of Health provided \$1.5 million in funding for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. In 2022, the Ministry provided another \$1.5 million in funding and an additional \$1.1 million in December for the 2022-2023 fiscal year to support the Dedicated Offload Nurse Program. In 2023, the Ottawa Paramedic Service will be requesting a total of \$2.5 million in funding for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

The Dedicated Offload Nurse Program can have a positive impact on offload delay, however, in 2021 and 2022 combined, the Ottawa Paramedic Service still experienced more than 151,000 hours of offload delay. The expected expansion of the program should further reduce paramedic time spent in offload delay.

While the Province and local hospitals are responsible for developing mitigation strategies to reduce offload delay, the Ottawa Paramedic Service continues to seek additional ways to improve the program and maximize the availability of paramedics in the community.

### **Patient Priority System Distribution Tool**

In November 2020, the Ottawa Paramedic Service, The Ottawa Hospital, the Queensway Carleton Hospital, and the Montfort Hospital revised the decision support tool for patient distribution within Ottawa.

The goals of the Patient Priority System decision support tool is:

1. To ensure patients are transported to the most appropriate hospital emergency department based on health care need, specialty service, and shortest wait time.
2. To distribute patients based on the availability and capacity at local hospitals. Previously, most patients were distributed based on a simple allocation formula (two patients to either the Civic or General campus of The Ottawa Hospital for every one patient directed to the Queensway Carleton Hospital or Montfort Hospital).
3. To minimize offload delay for a paramedic crew at hospital.
4. To improve communication and information sharing between the Ottawa Paramedic Service and local hospitals.

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service expanded the Patient Priority System decision support tool to include Winchester District Memorial Hospital. In 2023, enhancements to the Patient Priority System will incorporate hospital occupancy, hospital capacity, and patient medical acuity.

### **MITIGATION STRATEGIES - NEW**

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service implemented several new strategies aimed at mitigating offload delay and reducing level zero events.

#### **Patient Flow Paramedic**

In late December 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service, in partnership with the Queensway Carleton Hospital, implemented the Patient Flow Paramedic initiative, which was expanded to The Ottawa Hospital (Civic and General campuses) in 2022. Through this initiative, a single paramedic (Patient Flow Paramedic) can be deployed to the emergency department to receive up to four patients arriving by ambulance so up to four paramedic crews can return to service in the community.

The Patient Flow Paramedic will monitor patients until transfer of care to hospital staff occurs. Since implementation, Patient Flow Paramedics have cared for 1,910 patients for a duration of 4,272 hours. Following correspondence with the Ministry of Health regarding excessive offload times at Ottawa hospitals, the City received a memorandum from Christine Elliott, former Minister of Health on February 16, 2022, requesting that the Ottawa Paramedic Service begin “batching” patients, which is ostensibly the Patient Flow Paramedic initiative.

## **Emergency Department Paramedic**

In June 2022, in partnership with the Montfort Hospital, the Ottawa Paramedic Service launched a pilot program that integrates a Primary Care Paramedic into the emergency department with the goal of reducing offload delay, reducing level zero events, increasing the availability of paramedic resources in the community, and consequently improving patient flow within the hospital. The program includes a Primary Care Paramedic who works a 12-hour shift in the emergency department of the Montfort. The paramedic works within their professional scope of practice under the medical direction of an emergency department physician. When an ambulance arrives, patient care may be transferred from the transporting paramedic crew to the paramedic working in the emergency department. This allows the paramedic crew to return to service in the community.

The program development was expedited and implemented in June. The collection of data to assess the program only commenced in the fall. From October, 2022 to February, 2023, the Emergency Department Paramedic cared for more than 565 patients for a total of approximately 650 hours. This is time that a paramedic crew could have been held in offload delay had they not been able to transfer care to the Paramedic working in the emergency department. In 2023, the Ottawa Paramedic Service and Montfort Hospital will continue to monitor and evaluate program success and make refinements, including expanding the program hours of operations.

## **Patient Ratio Protocol**

In September 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service implemented the Patient Ratio Protocol. This protocol is activated when the Service is experiencing a level zero event or paramedic crew nearing end of shift is held in hospital offload delay. The Patient Ratio Protocol allows for another paramedic crew in offload delay at the same hospital to assume care for another patient, so the crew nearing end of shift can complete their shift on time. This initiative reduces the occurrence for overtime, particularly at the end of their shift.

## **Physician Assessment on Stretcher**

In November 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service worked with the Regional Paramedic Program for Eastern Ontario (RPPEO) to allow a physician to assess and provide treatment to a patient while in the care of a paramedic crew during offload delay. Allowing a physician to assess a patient in offload delay can result in patient care being

expedited, improve flow in the emergency department. Each of these scenarios will permit a paramedic crew to return to service in the community.

### **Paramedic Treatment on Offload Delay**

In November 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service implemented an initiative to permit a paramedic to administer patient treatment while on offload delay at the hospital. Previously, a paramedics was only permitted to monitor the patient while in offload delay. Through this initiative, a paramedic can consult with an RPPEO physician on patient care and provide treatment as may be required. When a paramedic is permitted to continue patient care and treatment, this can result in patient care being expedited, improve flow in the emergency department. Each of these scenarios will permit a paramedic crew to return to service in the community

### **Revisions to the Generally Unwell Card**

Central Ambulance Communications Centres across Ontario, including the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre, use the Dispatch Priority Card Index as a tool for call assessment or triage for 9-1-1 calls. In March 2022, the Ministry of Health advised that the Dispatch Priority Card Index was being updated as part of an ongoing review of historical data to ensure calls are prioritized correctly.

The Generally Unwell Card was the first card to be revised. This card is referenced when an Ambulance Communications Officer is unable to appropriately categorize a caller's chief complaint as something other than generally 'sick' or 'unwell'. In 2022, the default Communications Priority Code for the Generally Unwell Card was revised from a Code 4, Urgent Call (a situation of a life or limb threatening nature where time is crucial) to a Code 3, Prompt Call (a call which may be answered with moderate delay). An analysis of data from 2022 (nine months following the revisions) compared to the same timeframe in 2021, showed a decrease of approximately 7,000 Code 4 calls, suggesting the revisions to the Generally Unwell Card were extremely effective in reducing call over-prioritization and improving ambulance resource utilization.

### **Breakaway Crews**

Prior to deployment into the community, a paramedic crew participates in a start-of-shift briefing at Paramedic Headquarters. In November 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service revised its start-of-shift procedure to require that a breakaway crew be identified at the beginning of every shift. In the event that the Service is experiencing a level zero event, the breakaway crew is deployed immediately (forgoing the briefing) to respond to a call waiting in queue. Not only does this help mitigate the impacts of level zero, but it also

prevents paramedic crews who are ending their shift at Paramedic Headquarters from being reassigned to a new call, which can also reduce the need for overtime.

### **Mobile Logistics Support Unit**

In November 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service implemented a Mobile Logistics Support Unit to provide logistical support to paramedic crews in the field. Through this new initiative, Equipment and Supply Technicians are deployed to resolve vehicle and equipment issues, to inspect, resupply, and repair medical equipment, or to exchange contaminated equipment. Providing logistical support in the field can save a paramedic crew from having to return to Paramedic Headquarters for equipment or supply deficiencies, reducing the amount of time paramedic units are out of service, maximizing their availability in the community. From November 2022 to March 2023, the Mobile Logistics Support Unit was deployed 416 times to assist a paramedic crew in the field. In more than 90 per cent of these deployments, the Mobile Logistics Support Unit was able to remedy the crew's equipment, resource, or supply needs. This allowed the paramedic crew to resume service in the community in a timely manner, without having to return to Paramedic Headquarters for assistance.

## **PARAMEDICINE AND HEALTH SYSTEM MODERNIZATION**

Health system pressures have been increasing for several years resulting in a need to reimagine our healthcare system. This need became more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic which caused major disruptions, backlogs in non-emergent care, and shortages in human health resources.

The Paramedic is the only health professional that bridges the healthcare system and public safety. Paramedics work collaboratively with police and fire services. They also play a unique role in Ontario's healthcare system. Over the years, the paramedic role has evolved to meet community needs, shifting from an emergency based response to a more creative, patient and community-centered approach, helping fill gaps in health care. This was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to their regular emergency service responsibilities, paramedics assisted with COVID-19 screening and testing and administering vaccines. Further, community paramedics are crucial to supporting individuals who could not access primary care, especially vulnerable populations including isolated seniors and those living in remote areas. Community paramedics can also mitigate the impacts of offload delay and reduce the occurrence of level zero events by reducing or eliminating the need for the patient to go to the hospital emergency department.

The Ontario Government has recently taken steps to modernize the health system through the creation of Ontario Health Teams, the implementation of new patient models of care, and by funding community paramedic pilot projects. However, additional legislative and regulatory changes are needed, as well as base funding for community paramedic programs to fully integrate paramedics into the broader healthcare system. Regulated or not, paramedics are an integral part of health care and leveraging their full potential can alleviate pressure on the system, improve access to care and improve patient outcomes.

## **Ontario Health**

In 2019, the Government of Ontario created the Crown agency Ontario Health to oversee health care delivery across the province and modernize Ontario's health care system. Ontario Health's mandate is to connect, coordinate and modernize the province's health care system to ensure that the people of Ontario receive the best possible patient-centered care, when and where they need it. Ontario Health oversees health care planning and delivery across the province, which includes ensuring frontline providers and other health professionals have the tools and information they need to deliver quality care in their communities.

Ontario Health is divided into six regions and comprised of 54 Ontario Health Teams. Under Ontario Health Teams, health care providers work as one coordinated team, no matter where they provide care, to provide individuals with seamless access to the right care, by the right team, at the right time. The Ottawa Paramedic Service is an anchor partner and voting member of two Ontario Health Teams that cover residents in the Ottawa valley; Archipel and Ottawa West Four Rivers.

## **Ministry of Health Models of Care**

In 2021, the Ministry of Health announced it was launching new patient care models to give paramedics more options for providing individuals with the right care in the right place while helping to protect hospital capacity. The new models of care include:

- Transporting patients to destinations other than the emergency department where they can receive appropriate treatment.
- Treating patients on-scene and referring them to another health care provider.
- Treating and releasing patients on-scene.

- Referral of select low acuity patients during the 9-1-1 call to appropriate care in the community.

The new models of care will permit a paramedic to work under an expanded scope of practice to help fill gaps in the healthcare system. Patient eligibility criteria varies from model-to-model and municipalities must be approved by the Ministry of Health to implement a new patient care model.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service's Palliative Care Program operates under the 'Treat and Refer' model of care. Under the 'Treat and Refer' model, paramedics receive specialty training for treating palliative care patients in their home, which can include administering medication for pain, dyspnea, hallucinations or agitation, and nausea or vomiting. Once the patient has been treated, a paramedic will coordinate follow-up care with the patient's primary palliative care team.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service Mental Wellbeing Response Team operates under the 'Treat and Refer' model of care. Callers to 9-1-1 experiencing a mental health issue receive a medical and mental health assessment by a specially trained paramedic and a mental health professional who can provide resource referrals, a care plan, and arrange for follow-up mental health care. The Ottawa Paramedic Service was the first paramedic service in Ontario approved by the Ministry of Health to operate this model of care in the province.

Treating individuals in alternate care settings such as the community or their home can reduce hospital transports which can reduce offload delay and level zero events. Further, it can reduce repeat calls to 9-1-1, increase the availability of paramedics in the community, and provide individuals with better, more appropriate care.

## **SERVICE IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES**

For several years now, paramedic services across Ontario have been filling gaps in health and social services beyond their traditional mandate of emergency response. In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service continued to respond and adapt to the local needs of its residents through the delivery of new and existing initiatives aimed at improving overall service to the community.

### **Community Paramedic Programs**

A Community Paramedics extends the paramedic practice beyond traditional emergency response. As populations grow and age, and as the prevalence of chronic diseases rises, the need for innovative approaches to health care delivery has become



more apparent. This globally evolving community paramedic model of care utilizes a specially trained paramedic who can provide community-based, preventative, and primary health care services to vulnerable populations, individuals living with chronic health conditions, and seniors at their home or residence.

Through regular home visits, health assessments and interventions, medication management, and patient education, a community paramedic can reduce emergency calls for service, transportation to the hospital, and unnecessary hospital admissions and readmissions, all of which improves our healthcare system sustainability. These programs are transformative in the delivery of health care.

Over the past three years, the Ottawa Paramedic Service has received ad-hoc, annual one-time funding separately from the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Long-Term Care for various community paramedic projects. These programs fill gaps in the healthcare system and address the unmet health needs of vulnerable populations. Unfortunately, without permanent funding from the province, they remain pilot projects vulnerable to cancellation.

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service implemented or maintained several community paramedic programs.

#### *Remote Care Monitoring - Post Surgical Discharge Support*

In April 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service partnered with the Montfort Hospital to implement a new program to improve health system capacity, access and flow. A paramedic monitors post-surgical patients for a defined time after their discharge from hospital. Clinical pathways have been created in partnership with physicians so paramedics can perform the medical assessments and interventions needed to treat post-surgical complications and keep patients recovering safely at home. This shift of care from hospital to home has allowed for a patient to be discharged from hospital up to three days earlier. The program has seen a dramatic reduction in patient bounce backs to the emergency department. In the case of prostate resection surgery, bounce back rates have dropped from 40 percent to 6 per cent. This program supports the reduction of the provincial surgical backlog, frees up hospital beds, and reduces patient volume in the emergency department. This program has been designated as a 'Leading Practice' by Health Standards Organization and has been nominated for an Innovation Award.

### *Community Paramedics for Long-Term Care*

The Ottawa Paramedic Service has received funding from the Ministry of Long-Term Care to provide medical care to individuals who are eligible for long-term care placement or soon to be eligible for long-term care placement who require support to remain in their homes. A community paramedic will schedule patient visits, remotely monitor patient vital signs, provide acute episodic care, manage chronic conditions, and provide health education. Since December 2020, patients have shown a 20% reduction in the use of 9-1-1 at 90 days post enrollment in the program.

### *Neighborhood Integrated Care Model*

In September 2022, community paramedics ran the first Neighborhood Integrated Care Model wellness clinic in partnership with Ottawa Community housing. These clinics support seniors living in Ottawa Community Housing through health assessments and education, enrollment in ongoing community paramedic care, referrals to community health partners, and support for patients who do not have primary care providers. This program aims to improve overall health and reduce the need for emergency department visits and hospitalizations. The clinic permits a community paramedic to assess multiple patients, wherein 30 to 50 per cent are referred to further follow-up care. The Ottawa Paramedic Service has several more clinics planned at several Ottawa Community Housing sites.

### *Mental Wellbeing Response Team*

On March 1, 2022, in partnership with The Ottawa Hospital, the Ottawa Paramedic Service launched the Mental Wellbeing Response Team to provide individuals with appropriate mental health and substance use care in the community. The Mental Wellbeing Response Team is comprised of a specially trained paramedic and a mental health professional from The Ottawa Hospital, who, together, respond to non-violent, non-criminal 9-1-1 calls for service where mental health or substance use issues are contributing factors. The Mental Wellbeing Response Team operates under the Ministry of Health's approved 'Treat and Refer' model of care.

Through the Mental Wellbeing Response Team, callers to 9-1-1 experiencing a mental health or substance use issue can receive a medical assessment by a paramedic and a mental health assessment by a mental health professional who can provide resource referrals, a care plan, and arrange for follow-up mental health care. This service delivery enhancement improves patient and family satisfaction. Further, the program alleviates

healthcare system pressures. The Mental Wellbeing Response Team is a service delivery improvement providing a specialized care to a specific patient population.

The development of the Mental Wellbeing Response Team was informed by similar community-based response models operating in other jurisdictions including CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) in Oregon, the United Kingdom's clinical hub of specialty teams, and the Niagara Region's Mental Health and Addiction Response Team. Additionally, the Ottawa Paramedic Service has consulted with diverse groups in the community, including those with lived and living experiences, and is exploring additional opportunities for gathering community feedback, as part of the continuous improvement process. The Mental Wellbeing Response Team aligns with other mental health initiatives across Ottawa, including the City of Ottawa Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, approved by Council in October, 2021, and the Ottawa Guiding Council for Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

Since the program launch, 65 per cent of individuals assessed have received care in the community and were diverted away from the emergency department. In addition to reducing the number of transports to hospitals by treating and releasing individuals on scene, the Mental Wellbeing Response Team has improved the Ottawa Paramedic Service's overall service delivery to the community by:

- Reducing offload delay at hospitals (by decreasing the number of individuals transported to emergency departments).
- Reducing repetitive calls to 9-1-1 by providing individuals with the appropriate care and providing tools and supports for navigating the mental health care system.
- Increasing access to and assisting with the navigation of community-based mental health services.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service is collaborating with the University of Ottawa and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences to measure the outcomes of this initiative in alignment with the Community Safety and Well-being Plan, as well as the Ministry of Health's evaluation framework.

### **Heart Safe City**

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) used in combination with an Automated External Defibrillation (AED) may increase the likelihood of survival by 75 per cent or more.

In 2001, the Ottawa Paramedic Service implemented the Public Access Defibrillator Program, which has resulted in the placement and oversight of more than 1,200 AEDs in public and private buildings as well as in police, fire, and OC Transpo vehicles and all O-Train stations.

In 2021 and 2022, an AED was deployed to more than 830 sudden cardiac arrests in Ottawa. Further, the Ottawa Paramedic Service Public Education Team delivered over 970 First Aid, CPR, and AED courses to 9,159 individuals including members of the general public, Ottawa Public Health staff working at community vaccination clinics, and members of the Ottawa Police Service.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service's extensive Public Access Defibrillator Program and public training efforts have rendered Ottawa a 'Heart Safe' city.

### **Neonatal Transport Team Program**

In 2019, the Ontario Health Minister announced \$6.8 million in funding for five specially equipped ambulances and a team of paramedics in "key regions across the province" to support ambulance transport for Ontario newborns in need of specialized care.

In 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service received \$1,155,000 million in base funding from the Ministry of Health to staff and operate a regional service to Eastern Ontario with a dedicated ambulance 24/7 equipped to care for critically ill newborn patients. The Service also received \$250,000 in one-time funding for vehicle replacement (lifecycle). In 2021, the Neonatal Transport Team responded to 376 calls, resulting in over 1,200 hours of service.

In 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service expanded the Neonatal Transport Team Program to include critically ill pediatric patients. In 2022, the Team responded to 434 calls, resulting in over 1,470 hours of service.

Since 2020, the Neonatal Transport Team has responded to 34 per cent more calls over the previous year. This is consistent with a steady increase in overall response volume. In 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service requested an increase in base funding and funding for an additional ambulance for the 2023. In March 2023, the Ministry confirmed that the Ottawa Paramedic Service will receive an additional \$35,464 in base funding, bringing total base funding to \$1,220,534. The Service's funding request to support another dedicated ambulance was denied.

## **The Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre**

Since 2014, the Ottawa Paramedic Service has been working in partnership with the midwife-led Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre to improve the coordination of services to the community. The Service has shared protocols and operational procedures to ensure seamless quality care for ill newborn patients. In 2020, the Ottawa Paramedic Service and the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre worked together to implement a new piece of equipment called a NeoMate Pediatric Restraint System for the transport of all newborns under 10 lbs. The NeoMate Pediatric Restraint System is now standard equipment in all ambulances.

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service responded to 88 requests for service from the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre and transported 68 newborns and birthing parents requiring further medical care at a hospital.

## **Diversity Champion Program**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service Diversity Champion Program was established in 2010. Through collaboration with several organizations across Ottawa, the Ottawa Paramedic Service Diversity Champion Program builds relationships with diverse communities across the city, to improve overall equity, diversity and inclusion through recruitment and retention strategies aimed at creating an organization that is representative of the community it serves. The Diversity Champion Program is governed by the Diversity Champion Program Committee which is comprised of individuals from all branches across the Service. The Committee provides an ongoing forum for dialogue, research, and knowledge transfer in the Service.

In 2021 and 2022, the Diversity Champion Program coordinated communications and hosted activities for Ottawa Paramedic Service staff for various holidays and observances including, but not limited to, City of Ottawa Affinity Groups, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Chinese New Year, Black History Month, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Pride celebrations, Breast Cancer and Movember Awareness Campaigns, Mental Illness Awareness Week, World Suicide Prevention Day, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day, National Indigenous People's Day, National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, World Day of Social Injustice, International Women's Day, Day of Pink, Franco-Ontarian Day, Saint Jean Baptiste Day, and Trans Day of Remembrance. As well, diversity, inclusion, and equity content was incorporated into the Ottawa Paramedic Service's Professional Development Program and the Service's internal newsletter, Paramedic Update.

## **Naloxone Kit Expanded Access Program**

The growing number of overdoses and deaths caused by opioids in Ottawa and across Canada is both alarming and devastating. The opioid crisis is a complex health and social issue that has been exacerbated by the increasingly toxic drug supply and the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals with a substance use disorder often have increased feelings of isolation, stress, and anxiety, as well as a limited accessibility to health care and community services.

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. All paramedics in Ontario have been equipped with and trained to administer Naloxone since early 2016. As part of the Ontario Harm Reduction Program Enhancement, in 2021, the Ontario Naloxone Program expanded access to free Naloxone nasal spray kits for clients who are at high risk of an opioid overdose, as well as their friends and family. Through this Program, Ottawa Public Health supplies the Ottawa Paramedic Service with Naloxone kits for distribution to individuals who are at risk of overdose. In April 2021, Superintendents and paramedics in the Paramedic Response Unit began distributing these kits to the at-risk population with no questions asked to prevent overdoses in our community. From April to December 2021, over 600 paramedics were trained on Naloxone kit distribution criteria, and over 130 individual kits were distributed. In 2022, more than 210 individual kits were made available to the public through this initiative in partnership with Ottawa Public Health.

## **Continuing Medical Education and Clinical Research**

### *Continuing Medical Education*

The evolution of the paramedic profession has accelerated since the onset of the pandemic. The paramedic scope of practice has expanded from providing basic urgent and emergent care to include health prevention, promotion, and chronic and community care. As well, paramedics now work in non-traditional environments including hospitals, long-term care facilities, and individual's homes. As per the Regional Paramedic Program for Eastern Ontario (RPPEO), as the paramedic practice becomes increasingly professionalized, paramedics are becoming more responsible for integrating new skills and knowledge into practice. Continuing medical education is an essential component in the maintenance of competence. The Ottawa Paramedic Service, in partnership with the RPPEO, is committed to providing staff with training and development opportunities to maintain and enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities. In 2021 and 2022, some of the continuing education topics included:

- Palliative care for end-of-life patients
- The introduction of several new medications including:
  - Oxytocin for post-partum care
  - Dexamethasone for respiratory care (bronchoconstriction)
  - Ondansetron (Zofran) for patients experiencing nausea or vomiting
- A new treatment for severe chest trauma wherein a needle is inserted into the chest (pleural space)
- The introduction of double sequential defibrillation in the treatment of sudden cardiac arrest events

### *Clinical Research*

In alignment with the Ottawa Paramedic Service's strategic goals and commitment to deliver clinical excellence, the Service has been actively engaged in numerous research activities. The Service recognizes that pre-hospital research is essential for driving innovation and improving patient care in our community. Through research, we can better understand the needs of Ottawa's diverse population, identify best practices, and develop more effective treatments and care protocols.

Over the past two years, the Ottawa Paramedic Service's research accomplishments have been significant. The Service participated in the DOSE VF (Double Sequential External Defibrillation for Refractory Ventricular Fibrillation) study which used two defibrillators operating in tandem to improve survival for patients in sudden cardiac arrest. This study was published in the New England Journal of Medicine and is changing care for out-of-hospital cardiac arrests. As well, in 2022, an award-winning multi-year study that evaluated the impact of paramedics applying the Canadian C-Spine rule was presented at a national conference. The Canadian C-Spine rule is a decision support tool that allows paramedics to transport patients without spinal immobilization following a trauma event. When a paramedic applies the Canadian C-Spine rule, the result has been improved patient comfort and significantly reduced healthcare costs.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service's research efforts have been recognized nationally and internationally, with numerous presentations on topics such as community paramedics, how to build a prehospital research program, and our experience responding to COVID-19 outbreaks. As well, the Service has had articles published in scientific journals including a national survey of paramedic services on alternative models of care for long-

term care patients, and a cohort study of clinical response teams providing support to long-term care homes during COVID-19 outbreaks.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service contributes to the advancement of out-of-hospital care in our community and beyond. Our commitment to research supports the Service vision and mission statements as well as our strategic goals and aligns with the Quadruple Aim framework. Through ongoing research efforts, we strive to enhance patient experience, improve population health, reduce the cost of healthcare, and improve the work life of paramedics.

In 2023, the Ottawa Paramedic Service will expand research efforts by participating in several new studies aimed at improving patient outcomes. One study will employ machine learning to increase bystander cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) rates by enhancing the recognition of abnormal breathing (agonal respirations) by Ambulance Communications Officers during 9-1-1 calls. Another study aims to validate the Canadian Prehospital Syncope Risk Score, which could lead to alternative models of care for patients who experience episodes of fainting.

## **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR STAFF**

The very nature of the work of an Ambulance Communications Officer and paramedic lends itself to exposure to potentially traumatic incidents on a regular basis which can impact an individual's mental health and wellness. In the last few years, this has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, capacity challenges in healthcare, an increasing response volume, and events triggering moral injury.

In response to 2016 changes in legislation which recognized posttraumatic stress disorder as a work-related illness for first responders, including paramedics and communication officers; the Emergency and Protective Services department developed a Mental Health Strategy, which focuses on prevention, awareness, and support. The Ottawa Paramedic Service has continued to maintain and implement several initiatives to support the mental wellbeing of staff as described in this section.

### **Peer Support Program**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada defines peer support as “a supportive relationship between people who have a lived experience in common.” Peer supporters are not mental health professionals, rather, peer supporters are coworkers that support their peers by listening, empathizing, defusing, and providing resource information. Peer supporters are critical to the maintenance of a healthy workplace.



Established in 2014, the Ottawa Paramedic Service Peer Support Program consists of 50 peer supporters who are available 24/7 to provide staff with emotional support for work and life stressors. In 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service's Peer Support Coordinator, Lorraine Downey, was one of 20 individuals recognized by the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT) as a Champion of Mental Health for her dedication and commitment to supporting her colleagues' mental health and well-being.

Over the years, Peer Support interactions have been steadily increasing. In 2021, the Peer Support Team interacted with 181 individuals with a total of 275 formal interactions. In 2022, the Team interacted 226 individuals with a total of 365 formal interactions with staff. In 2022, the number individuals who interacted with the Peer Support Team increased by 25 per cent over the previous.

In 2021 and 2022, in addition to having 640 staff interactions, the Peer Support Team also completed hundreds of check-ins with employees who were out of the workplace on sick leave, long-term disability, or Workplace Safety and Insurance Board-related injuries. In 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service Peer Support Team provided guidance in the development of the City's Peer Support Network Guidelines and supporting videos which highlight best practices for establishing a formalized Peer Support Network. The Peer Support Team is one of seven Peer Support Networks at the City and actively participates on the corporate Peer Support Network Community of Practice that was established in 2022.

### **First Responders Mental Health Study and Operational Stress Injury and Mental Health Clinic**

In 2018, the City of Ottawa entered into a partnership with the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and Defence Research and Development Canada to complete a Mental Health study for Ottawa's first responders (Ottawa Fire Services, Ottawa Police Service, and Ottawa Paramedic Service) entitled "A Personalized Approach to Mental Health Disorders in First Responders".

The objective of the study was to plan, survey, and pilot prevention and treatment protocols for first responders suffering from mental health disorders. The findings of the study will guide the department in coordinating supports to reduce the impacts of mental health disorders and provide information on the feasibility and acceptability of new models of care, as well as any remaining barriers to implementation of these new models of care.

Through this study, in June 2019, the Operational Stress Injury and Mental Health Clinic was established. The Operational Stress Injury Health Clinic accepted paramedics identified by the Ottawa Paramedic Service Peer Support Team who required additional assistance from a qualified psychiatrist in a timely manner. Before closing in December 2022, the Peer Support Team made upwards of 50 referrals to the Operational Stress Injury and Mental Health Clinic.

The results of the First Responders Mental Health Study, which was completed in 2021, suggest that mental health supports for first responders should include an approach which addresses their individual and specialized needs. Outcomes and recommendations have been incorporated into the development of the Emergency and Protective Services Mental Health Strategy which aims to enhance the mental health resources currently available to staff.

### **Partnership with the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre**

In late 2020, the Ottawa Paramedic Service and The Royal partnered with the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families (formerly the Centre of Excellence on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Related Mental Health Conditions) to provide mental health support for members of the Peer Support Team. In 2021 and 2022, Peer Supporters were provided monthly group support sessions with a clinical psychologist. As well, all Ottawa Paramedic Service staff were offered virtual education sessions by psychiatrists and psychologists on various topics including posttraumatic stress disorder, suicide, sleep, insomnia, self-care, grief, and moral injury.

### **City of Ottawa Trauma Assist Pilot Program**

In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service in partnership with Ottawa Fire Services and Ottawa Long-Term Care participated in *Trauma Assist* pilot program, offered by Human Resources Services. *Trauma Assist* is a specialized mental health program that connects first responders experiencing posttraumatic stress with a specialized network of counsellors and supervisors with experience and expertise in posttraumatic stress injury and posttraumatic stress disorder. While the City's Employee and Financial Assistance Program provides employees with access to short-term mental health support, it lacks the trauma specialization unique to *Trauma Assist*.

## **Before Operational Stress Program**

In 2022, Ottawa Paramedic Service staff were provided access to complete the virtual Before Operational Stress program. Twenty community paramedics participated in a therapist-led version of the program over the course of four weeks.

Before Operational Stress is a free, virtual, self-directed, and resiliency-based program specifically designed for Public Safety Personnel and first responders. The program was developed by leading mental health experts and psychologists of Wayfound Mental Health Group and is designed to provide practical tools for frontline workers to manage operational stress. The program not only equips participants with resources and skills to help people learn different ways to understand and react to stress but there has also been emerging evidence to demonstrate the program's effectiveness in improving mental health outcomes.

## **Peer-to-Peer Mobile Applications**

In 2021, two national peer-to-peer mobile applications (apps) were launched for Public Safety Personnel. The *OnCall* and *OnCallSupport* apps were co-designed by academics, researchers, clinicians, Public Safety Personnel, and peer support providers across Canada, including the Peer Support Coordinator for the Ottawa Paramedic Service. The *OnCall* app includes self-screening tools, tips to cope, in-app feedback surveys, and an opportunity to connect by phone or text with a peer-support provider. The apps are free and provide access to peer support either in real-time or through pre-recorded video clips and evidence-informed articles.

## **Mental Health Symposiums, Committees, Communities of Practice, and Task Forces**

In 2022, the Peer Support Coordinator was engaged in multiple communities of practice and task forces and participated in various symposiums that focused on best practices in preventing and managing Occupational Stress Injuries in Public Safety Personnel including the *Action Now and into the Future Symposium* and the *Coming Together - A Focus on Paramedic Organization Mental Health Conference*.

Additionally, in 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service participated in *PSP Connect*, a network of Canadian Public Safety Personnel who meet virtually and regularly throughout the year to share information, successes, and ideas on mental health programs and projects.

The Service also participated in the *Peer Support Community Network* hosted by the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families and the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment. The Network is comprised of several Peer Supporters of Public Safety Personnel from across the country who are working together to standardize peer support across Canada.

In 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service participated as a member of *the Solicitor General Mental Health Secretariat, Family Program Task Team*. The goal of the Task Team was to understand the current state of family programs for Public Safety Personnel and identify gaps by defining the responsibility and scope of family programs.

### **Suitability (Psychological) Assessments**

In 2022, as part of the internal process to recruit paramedics for the Mental Wellbeing Response Team, the Ottawa Paramedic Service engaged an organization that provides mental health support for first responders to complete suitability assessments of staff as part of the recruitment process. Paramedics working on the Mental Wellbeing Response Team respond to 9-1-1 calls for assistance where mental health or substance use issues are contributing factors. As such, there is potential for increased stress and vicarious trauma. The suitability assessments were a screening tool to identify any current mental health vulnerabilities amongst staff that could be further exacerbated by working on the Mental Wellbeing Response Team. The goal is to protect staff who may be at risk of developing mental health challenges.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service remains committed to delivering high quality care that meets the diverse and changing needs of the individuals and communities it serves.

In 2023, the Ottawa Paramedic Service will work with the Ministry of Health to prepare for the implementation of the Medical Priority Dispatch System in June 2024. This industry best practice for call assessment and prioritization will assist Ambulance Communications Officers in determining the most appropriate response which will maximize the use of paramedic resources and improve overall service to the community.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service will also continue to work on the West Deployment Facility project to address city-wide growth. The Paramedic Service Headquarters, located at 2465 Don Reid Drive, was built in 2005 and designed to meet operational needs for 15 years. As indicated in the Ottawa Paramedic Service 2019 and 2020

Annual Reports, the facility has reached its maximum capacity for vehicle deployments, staffing, and service delivery. As such, a secondary facility (West Deployment Facility) is required.

In 2022, Colliers Project Leaders (Colliers) was retained by the Ottawa Paramedic Service through the city of Ottawa's Request for Proposal process to conduct a strategic assessment of project risks and develop a project-specific risk register and matrix to inform the quantitative analysis of procurement options. Under this same Request for Proposal, Ernst & Young LLP (EY) was retained to complete a Value for Money Assessment to assess the feasibility of different funding models for a proposed West Deployment Facility. The Construction Management and Design-Build-Finance-Maintenance models were compared to determine the most viable delivery model option for the project.

In Fall 2023, the Ottawa Paramedic Service will bring forward a report to the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee and City Council, with recommendations on the preferred funding model for the development and delivery of the West Deployment Facility project.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service anticipates that its service delivery to the community will continue to be challenged beyond 2023. In 2023, the Ottawa Paramedic Service will continue to implement new and refine existing strategies to address an increasing response volume, to mitigate the impacts of offload delay, and to reduce level zero events. An example of a new program aimed at reducing offload delay is the Smart Transportation Program. In collaboration with the Regional Paramedic Program for Eastern Ontario (RPPEO), the Service will implement a new program to reduce the unnecessary transportation of low acuity patients to the emergency department. Through this program, paramedics will assess and safely treat patients in their place of residence. A Paramedic will conduct an enhanced patient assessment, consult with a physician, provide care and potentially leave the patient at home. For those patient left at home, a paramedic will make a follow call to the patient within the next 24 hours.

In 2023, the Ottawa Paramedic Service will expand the number of Neighborhood Integrated Care Model Wellness clinics. The Service will expand the Remote Care Monitoring - Post Surgical Discharge Support program with provincial support. Lastly, the Ottawa Paramedic Service will continue to explore partnerships with retirement homes and other populations with unmet needs to provide healthcare services, keep patients safe and reduce the number of transports to the emergency department.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is no legal impediment to receiving the information contained in this report.

## **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)**

There are no comments from Ward Councillors as this report is city-wide in nature.

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Mental Wellbeing Response Team**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service engaged in extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders, community groups, and residents in the development of the Mental Wellbeing Response Team. Internal stakeholders included Community and Social Services and Ottawa Public Health. External stakeholders and community groups included the Ministry of Health, the Regional Paramedic Program for Eastern Ontario, local hospitals, Ottawa Inner City Health, Canadian Mental Health Association Ottawa Branch, the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres, Mental Illness Caregivers Association of Canada, Youth Services Board, Counselling Connect, and the Distress Centre of Ottawa. As well, the Ottawa Paramedic Service consulted with the Toronto's Reach Out Response Network, and other paramedic services including Niagara, Middlesex London and Essex-Windsor. Feedback from these targeted consultations played a significant role in the development of various program components including training, logistics, and evaluation, as well as the implementation of the Mental Wellbeing Response Team. Examples of contributions from key stakeholders are described below.

#### *Mental Illness Caregivers Association of Canada*

The Ottawa Paramedic Service collaborated with the Mental Illness Caregivers Association of Canada (MICA) from program development through to implementation, acknowledging the vital role that caregivers play in an individual's care and mental health journey. As well, their unique experiences offered insight into where and how the healthcare system can be improved based on where they feel mental health support is lacking for those experiencing mental health challenges.

Through this collaborative approach, the Ottawa Paramedic Service was able to establish best practices for members of the Mental Wellbeing Response Team with regard to managing mental health crises and the importance of including an individual's caregivers (family members, friends) in the development an individual's mental health care plan. Best practices in de-escalation and care were also established for caregivers when a 9-1-1 activation has occurred.

MICA was also engaged in the onboarding and training of members of the Mental Wellbeing Response Team, offering insight to paramedics in their new role. The Ottawa Paramedic Service continues to collaborate and consult with the MICA for ongoing program improvement.

#### *Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa Branch*

The Ottawa Paramedic Service worked in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa Branch, to facilitate group consultations with individuals who have a diagnosed mental health condition or a history of substance use. The consultations focused on experiences of those who had used 9-1-1 during times of severe illness, and those who did not. For those who called 9-1-1, it was important to hear what worked well and where improvements could be made. It was equally important to understand why individuals chose not to call 9-1-1 in their time of need, or, if they experienced any barriers to accessing equitable mental health care in the community.

Feedback from these individuals with lived and living experience was incorporated into the development of the program response model and the design of the Mental Wellbeing Response Team uniform and vehicle, with an aim to reduce stigma and balance power differentials in accessing mental health care. Through these consultations individuals shared their experiences of racism and marginalization. Individuals were provided the opportunity to identify individual identity factors that they perceived contributed to their mental health experiences, including previous experiences with paramedics and the 9-1-1 system, and how these identity factors contributed to accessing equitable mental health care. Varying cultural, sexual, and gender specific feedback was incorporated into development of the training curriculum for staff, which included topics on social determinants of health, intersectionality, gender-based violence, power differentials, stigma and the power of language, cultural sensitivity, and barriers to accessing equitable mental health care. Additionally, staff completed the San'yas Indigenous Culture Safety training course, as well as the African, Caribbean, Black cultural safety training, delivered in partnership with Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition and Somerset West Community Health Centre.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service provides care for patients with disabilities in line with the obligations of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, 191/11. The Service ensures that patients with disabilities have continued access to their support persons and support animals during transport and arrange for temporary care of service animals, when it is not practicable to do so. The Ottawa Paramedic Service reports on its initiatives that enhance service to older adults and people with disabilities through the City's Annual City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan annually. In 2023, there will be a communications strategy to highlight Ottawa Paramedic Service policy 1.8 (Transporting Passengers in Emergency Vehicles) and the inclusion of support persons and service animals whenever possible.

When developing the Mental Wellbeing Response Team, the Ottawa Paramedic Service sought feedback from people with mental health disabilities and caregivers of people with mental health disabilities to inform accessible program delivery considerations and to identify and eliminate unintended disability barriers in the provision of paramedic services. Overall service delivery and programming is improved through this feedback as it aligns with the "nothing about us without us" principle which reinforces the vital role of people without disabilities as allies and partners sharing in the work towards full inclusion and equality.

## **DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service reports annually to the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee on the use of delegated authority, as described in Section 17 of Schedule F of the [Delegation of Authority By-law \(2023-67\)](#). The last reporting was on March 30 via the [Use of Delegated Authority in 2022 by Emergency and Protective Services](#).

There are no new delegated authority requirements associated with this information report.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service vision includes a statement regarding responsibility to the environment. Both the Ottawa Paramedic Service Headquarters and the Ottawa Central Ambulance Communications Centre are Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified buildings. LEED certification is the most widely



used global standard that recognizes buildings that are efficient, cost-effective, and better for occupants and the environment.

The Ottawa Paramedic Service is committed to the implementation and development of sustainability initiatives with the goal of reducing the overall environmental footprint of their services. In 2021 and 2022, the Ottawa Paramedic Service continued their work with the Corporation on their “Green Fleet” initiatives. In 2022, the Service introduced hybrid small fleet vehicles and is moving towards a fully electric fleet. The Service has replaced all interior and exterior building lights at Headquarters and Paramedic Posts with new LED technology, eliminating the need for the old fluorescent lighting. Further, in 2022, the Service updated their internal procurement processes to include sustainability as a purchasing consideration and established an Environmental Committee to evaluate opportunities for greater environmental protection and alignment with the City of Ottawa’s environment-related plans.

## **INDIGENOUS GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS**

### **Diversity Champion Committee**

The Diversity Champion Committee governs the Ottawa Paramedic Service Diversity Champion Program. The Committee assists in developing and implementing initiatives included in the City’s Corporate Diversity and Inclusion plan, Anti-Racism Strategy, and Women and Gender Equity Strategy.

Since the Diversity Champion Program was first established, members have participated in awareness, engagement, and educational events to promote the Ottawa Paramedic Service as an employer of choice to various diverse communities within Ottawa. Particular focus was placed on participation in communities identified within the City of Ottawa’s Equity and Inclusion Lens Snapshots, which were developed in consultation with community leaders to assist in the promotion of equitable initiatives to help City staff learn more about the people within its workforce and in the community who may require modified or focused inclusion efforts in order to achieve our overall equity goals.

Annually, for the past 11 years, the Diversity Champion Program has hosted the Paramedic Awareness Week (PAW) Camp. PAW Camp is a free, one-week event for youths aged 13-17, with a goal of reducing barriers for youth from all communities, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Muslim, Asian, racialized and immigrant communities, as well as those who identify as LGBTQI2S. PAW camp participants are encouraged to learn about various careers with the Ottawa Paramedic Service. In 2021,

PAW Camp was hosted virtually due to COVID-19 with a total of 9 youth participants. In 2022, PAW Camp returned to an in-person format and hosted 20 youth paramedics-in-training who were provided a behind the scenes look at the Service. They completed their Standard First Aid and CPR – C level certification, were introduced the job of a dispatcher, learned patient assessment and triage skills, became proficient in the use of an Automated External Defibrillator, and participated in leadership challenges. As well, in 2022, campers spoke several different languages including English, Polish, French, Cantonese, Spanish, Arabic, Yoruba, Somali, Mandarin, and Russian, representing more than 10 different cultures. This provided campers with an opportunity to learn about different cultures from other young people in their community.

### **Pathways to Indigenous Learning**

In 2021, the Ottawa Paramedic Service management team incorporated the Pathways to Indigenous Learning training program into its Professional Development Program for all staff. Pathways to Indigenous Learning is an online training program that aims to educate participants on the history of Indigenous and colonial relations. The program includes five e-learning modules that outline language and definition, and how government policies have impacted First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The knowledge gained from the program helps staff to better provide culturally appropriate care and service.

### **Gender-based Analysis Plus**

Appreciating the how various identity and social factors can influence the experience of government initiatives affecting different people, in 2021, the paramedic lead of the Mental Wellbeing Response Team completed the Government of Canada's Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) course in the early stages of project development. According to the Government of Canada, "GBA Plus is an analytical process that provides a rigorous method for the assessment of systemic inequalities, as well as a means to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The 'Plus' in GBA Plus acknowledges that GBA Plus is not just about differences between biological (sexes) and socio-cultural (genders). We all have multiple characteristics that intersect and contribute to who we are. GBA Plus considers many other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability, and how the interaction between these factors influences the way we might experience government policies and initiatives. Using GBA Plus involves taking a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach to our work. Considering all intersecting identity factors as part of GBA Plus, not only sex and

gender.” This course enabled the paramedic to make informed decisions and recommendations in consideration of the impact the program could have on different community groups. The paramedic applied foundational GBA Plus concepts and processes to enhance the responsiveness, effectiveness, and outcomes of the Mental Wellbeing Response Team.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Risk implications and associated mitigation strategies are identified and explained in this report.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

As per the [Ambulance Act](#), ambulance service in Ontario is seamless, meaning that the closest available ambulance is dispatched to respond to emergencies regardless of its municipal borders. The provision of seamless service requires neighbouring municipalities to provide care within the boundaries of the City of Ottawa. Similarly, the Ottawa Paramedic Service also provides care in bordering communities.

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

The services provided by the Ottawa Paramedic Service align with the 2019-2022 Term of Council Priority of Thriving Communities: Promote safety, culture, social and physical well-being for our residents.

## **DISPOSITION**

The Ottawa Paramedic Service will action any direction received as part of consideration of this report.