



Memorandum

Date: February 20, 2019

To: Mayor Letham and Council

From: Derek Brown, Acting Chief, Paramedic Service

Re: Special Project- Community Paramedic

Historically, the primary focus of paramedics has been to respond to the needs of the public in emergent and life-threatening situations. Interventions are based on the activation of the emergency medical system by calls placed to 911, whereby patients are provided immediate care then connected with other health care professionals.

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the demands on the health care system. Therefore, it has never been more prudent to find innovative strategies to provide quality primary health care to the public to mitigate the burden, including the demand on our Paramedic Service.

Evidence shows that there is increased pressure on the Ontario health care system by the aging population. The City of Kawartha Lakes, like other areas, is impacted by the escalating needs of older persons. Census Canada states that seniors age 65 or older make up 25% of the Kawartha Lakes community, and our local paramedic response data confirms that 70% of all 911 responses are for residents over the age of 60.

Community Paramedic Programs work in conjunction with community and social service agencies to increase access to primary health care services and decrease system pressures. The goal is to bridge the gaps in service for seniors and support the independence of those who wish to remain in their homes. Provincial Community Paramedic initiatives have proven their effectiveness in reducing unnecessary transport and admissions to hospital. Paramedics are a uniquely mobile and multi skilled group of health care professionals whose skill set can transfer from emergency health care to chronic disease management. Paramedics can assess, treat and refer patients to services that will not improve only their medical outcome, but in some cases their quality of life. This intervention transforms a once reactive service into a proactive health care initiative to keep seniors in their homes, while supporting and maintaining their independence.



Kawartha Lakes Paramedic service submitted a funding proposal to the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CELHIN) to establish a Community Paramedic Program supporting vulnerable, at risk seniors and high-risk hospital discharge patients in 2017 and 2019 respectively. In 2017 the Paramedic Service collaborated with the Family Health Care Team and Community Care of Kawartha Lakes to identify isolated older adults, those not connected to primary care and who were the most medically complex within their networks. Most recently in January of 2019, we worked on a proposal with the Ross Memorial Hospital to target high risk discharge patients to improve the transition from the hospital to home. This is a vulnerable period for the elderly patient with complex conditions, who are often frail, at risk for adverse events and unable to navigate the health care system after discharge. With both proposals, paramedics would provide health and environmental assessments, monitoring the patient's vital signs, level of functional and cognitive ability, as well as ensuring the patient's living conditions were adequate. Paramedics would intervene where immediate concerns were identified, such as access to food, properly taking medications, fall hazards, etc. and focus on health and wellness during their visits.

Program costs were structured as follows:

Expenses	
Paramedic Staff Costs (\$45 x 8hrs x 60 working days)	\$21,600
Medical Supplies	\$1,650
Fuel	\$1,750
Total	\$25,000

We modestly projected that if just three patients in total were kept in their home and not readmitted to hospital (bed costs of \$500/day); there would be a return on program investment of \$64,000 to the health care system. In the end, although we received high marks for both proposals, the CELHIN did not award any financial support for either program.

On February 14, the Paramedic Service was invited to speak at a community stakeholder meeting to identify and develop strategies to support vulnerable seniors in the City of Kawartha Lakes. A background of our municipality, the paramedic service and our current plan for addressing gaps in senior services were presented. After that meeting, organizers pleaded with government leaders at all levels to make money available to help our most vulnerable citizens- our seniors. Therefore, we are proposing a three month trial of our program in participation with the Ross Memorial Hospital to implement a high risk discharge and Community Paramedic Program supported by the City of Kawartha Lakes.