



## INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	June 17, 2021
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Hamilton Paramedic Service 2020 Annual Report (HSC21018) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Linda Button (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3104
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Michael Sanderson Chief, Hamilton Paramedic Service Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

### COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable

### INFORMATION

2020 was a particularly challenging year for the Hamilton Paramedic Service (HPS). In addition to the usual duties performed by paramedics such as emergency response, pre-hospital care, transport to care facilities and enhancing community paramedicine programs, paramedics also took on additional activities in response to the pandemic. Hamilton paramedics have been an allied partner of Hamilton's Public Health Services (PHS) and have been instrumental in assisting with COVID assessments and more recently vaccine deployment. Paramedics are on the frontline of the healthcare crisis working tirelessly to combat the virus and help keep the community healthy and safe.

At the onset of the pandemic in mid-March 2020, HPS experienced a decline in the demand for service. However, beginning in late May 2020 a steady increase in calls resulted in an increase in demand by the end of the year.

Key activities carried out in 2020 are described in the HPS 2020 Annual Report (attached as Appendix "A" to Report HSC21018) some of which are highlighted below:

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OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

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- Service demands decreased in March 2020 but began to increase again by the end of May 2020 and continued to escalate for the remainder of the year. In total, in 2020 paramedics performed 84,731 responses to 67,864 events and transported 48,412 patients, an average of 132 patients per day.
- Despite the additional demands in 2020, HPS again surpassed the standard target response times for each category of the patient care triage system, Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS). These target response times were approved jointly by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and City Council.
- Response time to calls dispatched as a life-threatening (Code 4) emergency at the 90th percentile was 11 minutes and 17 seconds. This reflects the time period from when the MOH Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) assigns the call to paramedics until paramedics arrive on scene.
- Hospital offload delays improved from 2019 due to the decrease in service demand during the first few months of the pandemic. They have now increased again and continue to pose challenges. The provincial guideline for hospital offload is 30 minutes 90% of the time. In 2020, only 47% of transfer of care from paramedics to hospital staff took place in 30 minutes or less. A total of 20,997 staffed ambulance hours were consumed waiting for transfer of care beyond the first 30 minutes after arrival at hospital.
- Code Zero events were down significantly in 2020 with a total of 27 events. Code Zero events occur when the number of ambulances available to respond to a call are limited to just one or none.
- From March 1, 2020 to the end of the year, Hamilton paramedics cared for 9,138 patients suspected as being COVID positive.
- One additional staffed ambulance for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week service was implemented in April 2020 following Council approval during the 2020 annual operating budget process. This additional resource is required to keep up with service demands amidst growing operational pressures.
- The Community Paramedicine Program, now Mobile Integrate Health (MIH), was expanded in 2020 with additional resources and partners for programs such as the Remote Patient Monitoring program and Social Navigator Program. A new program to support high-risk people waiting to be placed in long-term care was also added to MIH activities. In addition, Community Paramedics have taken on activities to assist HPS in conducting COVID swabbing, providing aftercare for people receiving the COVID vaccination and administering vaccinations.

- MIH programs have become an even more integral part of community health and well-being than ever before. They continue to be successful as is evident by the following examples:
  - The Home Visit program had 621 clients in 2020 and experienced a 31 percent reduction in ambulance use among these clients.
  - In 2020, 115 patients were enrolled in the Remote Patient Program with 3,473 alerts yet only 4 transports to hospital.
  - The Social Navigator Program had 77 intensive case management clients in 2020 and a 55 percent decrease in negative police interaction among these clients after three months in the program. Assistance was also provided to an additional 512 individuals in need through this program.
  - Community Paramedics administered 1,840 influenza shots during the flu season at CityHousing Hamilton buildings and at other locations through the Mobile Flu Clinics such as long-term care facilities, residential care facilities, Central Library and shelters. As well, flu shots were provided to first responders and City staff.
  - The COVID Swabbing Team conducted 9,504 tests in 2020.
  
- Additional training and continuous improvement activities in response to the pandemic occurred in 2020, including:
  - Established and trained the Infectious Disease Paramedic Team to support paramedics, particularly when transferring COVID positive patients between facilities.
  - Established and trained the COVID Swabbing Team.
  - Collaborated with St. Joseph's Healthcare COVID simulation event to finetune how best to care for COVID positive patients being transferred from St. Joseph's Urgent Care Centre to their hospital's Emergency Department
  - Implemented and expanded the ability for paramedics to access physicians virtually to assist with their patients on scene or in the patient's home.
  - Secured a PPE monitoring and distribution system to effectively and efficiently manage the inventory of PPE.
  - Designed a program that enabled isolation gowns to be reused which was implemented for all medical staff at the City.
  - Developed and implemented an enhanced cleaning program for all response vehicles in the HPS fleet.
  - Developed an online application that makes COVID screening easy for paramedics, stores information and maintains tracing records.
  
- Despite a year of unprecedented challenges, Hamilton paramedics still found ways to give back to the community. For example, through food drives for a total of over 10,000 pounds of food and \$5,000 was donated to Neighbour-to-Neighbour Centre. In addition, a toy drive for CityKidz resulted in the donation of numerous toys and \$11,700. As well, paramedics began a new initiative to ensure seniors at the City's

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long-term care homes had gifts over the holidays since they could not be with their families.

- Hamilton paramedics were deeply moved by the overwhelming show of support and appreciation from the community that was expressed in a wide variety of ways including donations of food, PPE, sanitizer as well as signs, cards and artwork.

As the health care crisis persists into 2021, HPS will be even more present on the frontline helping to deliver vaccines to high risk and vulnerable populations including homebound individuals. As well, HPS will support regional efforts to level capacity loads in GTA hospitals by assisting with interfacility transfers. MIH activities, which are more important now than ever, will continue to deliver care to people in their homes thereby avoiding visits to Emergency Departments. MIH will also continue to explore ways to reach more people in the community. The development of the HPS ten-year Master Plan, which was deferred due to the pandemic, will resume in 2021. Providing excellent emergency, pre-hospital and at-home care through technology, innovation, clinical training and continuous improvement efforts will remain a focus for 2021.

#### **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix “A” to Report HSC21018: Hamilton Paramedic Service 2020 Annual Report