



Office of the Commissioner  
Community and Health Services Department

## MEMORANDUM

To: Regional Chair Emmerson and Members of Regional Council

From: Katherine Chislett  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Date: November 13, 2020

Re: Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care Pilot Program

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### **In [October 2020](#), the Ministry of Long-Term Care announced a new Paramedic Services Program that supports people waiting for long-term care**

As part of the province's plan to address systemic barriers in long-term care bed development and the growing demand for long-term care, the Ministry of Long-Term Care (the Ministry) is funding a new program called Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care. The Ministry is investing up to \$5 million to launch this program across the province in phases. Phase One begins now, will continue until the end of 2023 and will be delivered by paramedic services in York Region, Brant County, Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board, the City of Ottawa and Renfrew County. The program will be fully provincially funded and operated in partnership with local municipalities. York Region is eligible to receive up to \$1.5 million in 2020/2021.

The program's goal is to keep individuals who are waiting for long-term care safe and stable in their own homes for as long as possible. Community paramedics will provide supports such as:

- 24/7 access to defined non-emergency procedures such as diagnostic procedures, assessment and testing; treatment under appropriate physician oversight; or treatment of minor conditions (e.g. falls, lacerations) through in-home, online or virtual supports
- Ongoing monitoring of changing or escalating conditions to prevent or reduce emergency incidents and if necessary, connecting them to the right health care provider at the right time in order to avoid escalation and crisis
- Additional education about healthy living or managing things like chronic diseases

## **York Region is well positioned to deliver this innovative program**

The Ministry selected the five municipalities for Phase One based on three criteria:

1. **Longer wait times for long-term care.** York Region has a large senior's population with increasing numbers requiring long-term care. As of October 2019, there were 5,032 individuals on the Central Local Health Integration Network's waitlist for placement in York Region's 28 long-term care homes (3,727 beds). As the demand for beds far exceeds the supply, the Region's seniors will benefit from this new program to support them at home.
2. **A mature community paramedicine program with capacity to deliver the program.** The Region's Community Paramedicine program has many years' experience caring for vulnerable populations. In 2009, the Paramedic Services Referral Program began to refer individuals to needed community supports; in 2011, Paramedic Services began providing services in emergency housing shelters; and in 2013, the larger Community Paramedicine Program was established. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Region's Community Paramedicine Program has taken on an increasingly prominent role in the healthcare system by:
  - Working alongside service partners to provide COVID-19 surveillance testing for staff within long-term and congregate care settings
  - Providing COVID-19 testing in the community, at multiple transitional housing sites, and for healthcare workers at Paramedic Services headquarters
  - Collaborating with Ontario Health Teams, Ontario Health, Planning and Implementation tables and local emergency services to provide coordinated supports
  - Providing flu shots for vulnerable populations, first responders and health care providers
  - Preparing to re-start Community Paramedicine Programs, including Home Visits and the CP@Clinic program, which were both suspended due to COVID-19
3. **Geographical diversity.** York Region has rural areas, urban areas, and communities of various sizes with differing levels of access to health care and social supports.

## **The Province's framework for the pilot is still being drafted, but program goals and eligibility have been defined**

York Region Paramedic Services, together with the other four municipalities, are working with the Province to design the framework for the pilot. Although the content is subject to change as planning evolves, the four guiding principles for the program are to be accessible, responsive, proactive and safe. The three broad goals for the program are as follows:

1. Safely keep eligible\* individuals in their own home for as long as possible
2. Provide individuals, families and caregivers peace of mind while waiting for a long-term care bed or in choosing to delay the option for long-term care
3. Minimize waitlist growth and duration by providing alternative options for individuals who wish to stay home longer with appropriate care

\*Eligible individuals include those who are eligible for long-term care and/or on the waitlist for long-term care placement, as well as individuals who are assessed by placement coordinators as soon to be eligible for long-term care. The community paramedic can also complete an assessment to determine if a vulnerable senior who is using other Paramedic Services programs would fit the criteria or benefit from this program.

### **The Region will collaborate with key health system partners to plan the program**

Paramedic Services will collaborate with health and social services partners to develop York Region's Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program. Policies and processes will be created—using formalized agreements or mutually accepted guidelines—to ensure proper coordination and service alignment for processes such as: referral and intake; developing patient care plans; transition and hand-off processes to the next appropriate level of care; documentation; and medical record-keeping. Potential partners and roles may include:

- The Central Local Health Integration Network/Ontario Health Teams – eligibility assessments and program referrals
- Health Care Partners, e.g. primary care, home and community care – share information and integrate services with the program
- York Region's Paramedic Services – implement program, collect data, report to Ministry, oversee the delivery of the program including assessment, intake, service planning and delivery, progress reporting and others

Roles and responsibilities are still to be considered and may change as planning progresses.

### **The Region, together with planning partners, has discretion to plan the program's services according to locally-defined need**

The Region will work with partners to define the program's services, which must be informed by the needs of people on the long-term waitlists and the program goals, and meet the guiding principles to be accessible, responsive, proactive and safe.

The program will build on existing community services and other paramedic programs to increase capacity and maximize resources rather than subsidize or offset existing programs. Paramedic Services will leverage existing programs such as CP@Clinic and the Paramedic Services Referral Program to connect individuals to the new pilot. Effective communication is

required between partners to ensure program participants can access the right services and care when needed, and increase efficiency and reduce duplication in the healthcare system.

Additional temporary staff resources will be required to provide new components of the program including home visits and potentially remote home monitoring. It is anticipated that these costs will be 100% funded by the Province.

### **The Program will be subject to accountability mechanisms, analysis and evaluation**

The Ministry is working to establish the following accountability mechanisms:

1. Formal agreements (e.g., Transfer Payment Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding)
2. Quality improvement reviews and reporting
3. Financial Reporting

The Ministry requires an evaluation of Phase One's outputs and outcomes that demonstrate improved patient outcomes and cost-effectiveness. The Ministry is drafting potential indicators linked to outputs and outcomes that the Region will report regularly on. The Ministry will work together with York Region Paramedic Services to collect and analyse data on processes, services and outcomes. The Region may collect additional qualitative or quantitative measures for planning purposes if desired.

The Ministry indicated that outcomes of Phase One will inform future decision-making, program improvements, and potential expansion of the program to communities interested in Phase Two.

### **Participating in this pilot will benefit York Region residents, the local healthcare system and York Region Paramedic Services**

The Region anticipates the following benefits will result from delivering this program:

- Support for seniors to age in place and remain in their own homes as long as possible and reduced pressure on long-term care waitlists
- Alignment with York Region Paramedic Services Palliative Care Program, where paramedics provide treatment, transport and/or referral for registered palliative care patients
- Crisis prevention that may have otherwise required transport to hospital or placement on the crisis waitlist for long-term care
- Mitigation of pressures on the 9-1-1 system through in-home care and mitigation of offload delays, keeping ambulances available in the community to respond to 9-1-1 requests
- Reduced hospital emergency department volumes, and less demand for alternative level of care beds in hospitals

- Improved integration of York Region's Paramedic Services in the health care sector through enhanced partnerships and collaborative planning with local health care partners (Ontario Health Teams, Primary Care, Home and Community Care)

Further details of this new program are still being worked out with the Ministry and will be reported to Council once they are known.

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Katherine Chislett  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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