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To: Committee of the Whole

Meeting Date: May 8, 2025

From: Lisa Gonsalves  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Re: **Paramedic Services Week May 18 to 25, 2025 and York Region  
Paramedic Services' 25th Anniversary**

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This memorandum provides Council with an update on the nationally recognized Annual Paramedic Services Week and recognizes 25 years of service by York Region Paramedic Services.

### **Paramedic Services Week 2025 recognizes the critical role paramedics play across Canada to care for people in their communities**

Paramedic Services Week 2025 will be celebrated across Canada from May 18 to 25. National Paramedic Services Week unites local communities and emergency medical personnel to honor the dedication of those who provide lifesaving services on the front lines of medicine. It also raises public awareness about safety issues, including injury prevention and how to respond to medical emergencies. York Regional Council first proclaimed National Paramedic Services Week in 2003 and has continued to do so annually. Recognizing National Paramedic Services Week provides an opportunity to increase public awareness regarding the contribution of services paramedics provide in the Region's communities.

Each year, Paramedic Chiefs of Canada sets a theme to bring awareness to paramedicine and help guide initiatives for the week. The theme for Paramedic Services Week 2025 is "We Care for Everyone".

### **York Region Paramedic Services has planned events to showcase the essential services paramedics provide and to recognize their invaluable contributions**

Paramedic Services has planned the following events to acknowledge Paramedic Services Week 2025:

- **Grand Opening and Open House for Paramedic Services Station 32:** Regional Council and residents will be invited to the grand opening of York Region Paramedic

Services Station 32 located at 53 Jacob Keefer Parkway in the City of Vaughan. This event will offer an opportunity to tour the new facility, meet the Region's dedicated paramedics and see how they are equipped to serve the community. Attendees can expect guided tours, and the chance to interact with paramedics and ambulance fleet. Completion of Paramedic Station 32 is part of the 2021 - 2031 Paramedic Services Master Plan, approved by Council in [June 2022](#), to help maintain response times and provide equitable service across the Region

- **Family Fun Day:** York Region Paramedic Services will be hosting a Family Fun Day in partnership with York Region Public Works to celebrate National Public Works Week and Paramedic Services Week 2025. Council and residents will be invited to attend Family Fun Day. The event will be hosted at York Region Public Works Operations Centre and Paramedic Services Headquarters in Sharon. The event will have activities for children and families and will spotlight important services keeping the Region's communities operating smoothly including roads, transit, water, recycling, forest conservation and first responders
- **Staff Appreciation Gatherings:** Barbeques will be held for staff and their families to recognize their hard work and dedication to the community

### **In addition to celebrating Paramedic Services week, the Region is also celebrating York Region Paramedic Services' 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

York Region assumed responsibility for the delivery of land ambulance services in January 2000, amalgamating six ambulance services that previously operated in the Region.

Since its inception, York Region Paramedic Services has consistently delivered reliable and efficient services to the community as last reported to Council in the annual Response Time Report ([June 2024](#)).

York Regional Council's support and investment have enabled Paramedic Services to provide quality clinically and culturally competent care and meet Ministry and Council-approved response time targets. Support of the 2021 - 2031 Paramedic Services Master Plan, approved by Council in June 2022, has facilitated the hiring of additional paramedics and support staff, expansion of the ambulance fleet and construction of a new paramedic service station to meet the needs of the community. Additionally, Council's support has allowed Paramedic Services to offer critical supports and leadership during crises and to be a sector leader in implementing several innovative programs.

### **Paramedic Services has provided critical supports and leadership during times of crisis**

Over the last 25 years, paramedics have demonstrated bravery, dedication, and service to the Region's communities during times of crises:

- The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2003 was a significant global event where Paramedic Services played a critical role in transporting infected patients to hospitals. Several paramedics and other healthcare providers were infected while treating patients with SARS. Learning from this outbreak, the Service implemented enhanced infection prevention and control practices, such as mandatory mask fit testing for staff and conducting initial patient screenings to identify risk
- The Northeast Power Blackout of 2003 resulted in a loss of power for up to 20 hours across parts of Ontario, including York Region, and parts of the United States. During this outage, Paramedic Services supported local communities by responding to emergencies, sometimes in complete darkness. The Region's stations did not have back-up power generators at that time but are now designed for multi-day independent operation with back-up power
- During the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic in 2009, York Region Paramedic Services worked in partnership with York Region Public Health to provide vaccinations across the Region's communities in addition to providing emergency response
- In 2014, the Ebola Epidemic in West Africa resulted in more than 9000 cases and the death of more than 150 health care providers. Amidst concerns of global spread, Health Canada and Public Health Ontario directed response planning and preparedness activities. York Region Paramedic Services was tasked to research, develop and implement a response framework that would enable a safe and timely response should the need arise. Although a response was not needed locally, learnings from the planning exercises resulted in a more robust response model that would eventually be beneficial during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Paramedic Services also played a key role in supporting York Region residents during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Paramedics led immunization clinics for seniors in the community, as well as staff and residents of congregate living settings; ran COVID-19 testing sites at transitional housing sites, long-term and congregate care settings and at Paramedic Services headquarters; provided primary care, mental health and additional support for people experiencing homelessness; and continued to respond to 911 calls

## **York Region Paramedic Services has been an innovation leader in the sector**

Paramedic Services has implemented several innovative programs such as:

- Partnering with local fire services and operating the Automated External Defibrillator Program to improve response times for cardiac calls and save lives
- Launching the Region's Community Paramedicine program: York Region Paramedic Services was one of the first paramedic services to launch a community paramedicine program in Canada, which provides residents with a range of clinical supports through home visits and clinics in seniors' housing, long-term care homes, subsidized and

emergency housing and drop-in centres. The program prevents frequent 911 calls by providing proactive care, increases healthcare access for at-risk populations and empowers patients to manage chronic disease resulting in improved health outcomes and improved quality of life

- Creating the Special Response Unit in 2008, which was one of the first in the province. It is part of a multi-agency response involving York Regional Police and Municipal Fire Services, providing tactical medical support for high-risk warrants, barricades, hostage rescues, vehicle takedowns, active shooters, and bomb threats, resulting in faster life-saving medical care
- Establishing Paramedic Services' partnership with York Region hospitals through the Dedicated Offload Nurse Program in [October 2009](#). This has decreased average transfer of care times and reduced off-load delays, permitting paramedics to return to service sooner
- Partnering with Southlake Regional Health Centre in [March 2008](#) to develop bypass protocols enabling paramedics to transport patients suffering from a probable heart attack directly to the Region's Cardiac Care Centre. After a successful study, the protocol has been implemented across Ontario
- Implementing the Improving Patient Access and Care in the Community Program: Launched in April 2024, this initiative is an innovative new model of care that integrates paramedics into the broader healthcare system to perform enhanced diagnostics, provide on scene treatment, discharge patients at the scene, transport them to appropriate non-hospital destinations and coordinate care with healthcare partners

## **Paramedic Services Week 2025 and York Region Paramedic Services' 25th anniversary are important opportunities to acknowledge vital contributions York Region Paramedics make to the Region's communities**

Paramedic Services Week 2025 is an important way to acknowledge contributions of Paramedic Services Staff and is part of a year-long celebration to showcase their achievements in the last 25 years and engage the community. Several events have been planned throughout 2025 to celebrate the many achievements and contributions such as a York Region Paramedic Services exhibit at 17150 and 17250 Yonge Street and Paramedic Services Headquarters which will display artifacts and celebrate the growth and achievements of the service. Staff look forward to continuing trusted partnerships, planning and coordinating activities to celebrate Paramedic Services Week 2025 and engage residents.

This initiative does not present current or anticipated financial changes to the Region's budget or fiscal position.

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For more information on this memo, please contact Chris Spearen, Acting General Manager of Paramedic and Seniors Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74709. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



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Lisa Gonsalves  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



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Erin Mahoney  
Chief Administrative Officer

April 16, 2025  
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