



Report To: DSB Program Planning Committee

From: Michael Maclsaac  
Chief of EMS

Date: June 25, 2014

Re: EMS Costs – Issue Report

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board take this report as information only regarding the current levels of staffing within the EMS Department and Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB.

## **REPORT**

### **Purpose**

After the last DSB meeting direction was given by the CAO to review the current state of the EMS Department in relation to cost and work effort. It is well publicized that the costs of Municipal Emergency Services are at an all-time high. It is also a fact that the EMS Department makes up 46% of the overall gross DSB budget. The purpose of this report is to provide some information on how the EMS department is doing at containing costs and how our organization relates to others in terms of basic human resource allocation in relation to operational busyness.

### **Background**

In 1999 the provincial government downloaded responsibility for land ambulance in Ontario to the Upper Tier Municipalities. In this regions case responsibility fell to the DSB. At the same time as the download was occurring, a change was also made to the schooling required to become a paramedic. The former one year certificate course in community colleges became a 2 year diploma course in the year 2000.

The impact of both events occurring within the same time period had massive side effects. First, newly established municipally led ambulance services were finding that their areas were underserved in meeting the needs of their citizens. The former MOHLTC appointed contract providers were working under a level of effort system coordinating a historic system not looking in great detail to the current need. Being underserved for some time municipalities began to expand with the larger urban areas expanding at a rapid pace. Second, there was a year where there were no paramedic program graduates. There was a decrease of available paramedics (supply) with an increased

need (demand), therefore, a rise in costs. In the years surrounding provincial download, larger municipalities were actually offering signing bonuses to paramedics willing to come work for them. So not only were paramedics getting full time jobs out of school but some were getting bonus pay to work in one area versus another. Recruiting a paramedic became a highly competitive process.

Another effect of provincial download was now that Paramedics were within the municipal realm, they started to compare themselves to the other municipal based emergency services (fire and police). In some instances paramedics in urban areas were co-located with fire services within traditional fire halls. While co-location is a way to contain costs in terms of capital infrastructure, doing so also allowed two dissimilar services to compare and contrast many things associated with their jobs including workload and compensation. Paramedics began to feel that their profession was undervalued.

When you factor in the above issues with the fact that our population is aging, getting sicker, and causing an increase in emergency calls you have a situation where costs were certain to rise.

### Historical Wages

EMS wages in Ontario have been steadily on the rise, greatly due to the factors mentioned above. Where wages in the late 1990's were generally under \$20.00/hr., the provincial average wage for a Primary Care Paramedic (PCP) in 2013 was \$35.44/hr. Most recently yearly wage increases have begun to come down. The following table represents the last 10 years of average hourly wages for PCP's within our service, Northern Ontario and the Province as a whole.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013*	2014*	5 Year Average
<b>Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB</b>	4.03%	1.99%	3.53%	3.54%	2.01%	2.00%	1.99%	2.01%	2.00%	2.00%
<b>Provincial EMS Average</b>	4.74%	3.81%	3.41%	2.86%	2.62%	2.25%	2.03%	2.07%	1.50%	2.09%
<b>Northern EMS Average</b>	3.69%	3.84%	3.46%	2.64%	2.45%	2.11%	2.22%	1.55%	1.94%	2.05%
<b>Fire Services Provincial Average</b>			4.05%	3.25%	3.69%	3.03%	3.82%	2.98%	3.52%	3.41%
<b>Toronto Police</b>				3.25%	3.25%	3.19%	3.00%	3.00%	2.00%	2.89%
<b>OPP</b>				2.90%	2.90%	5.07%	0.00%	0.00%	8.50%	3.29%

- *Not all contracts have been settled within these years*

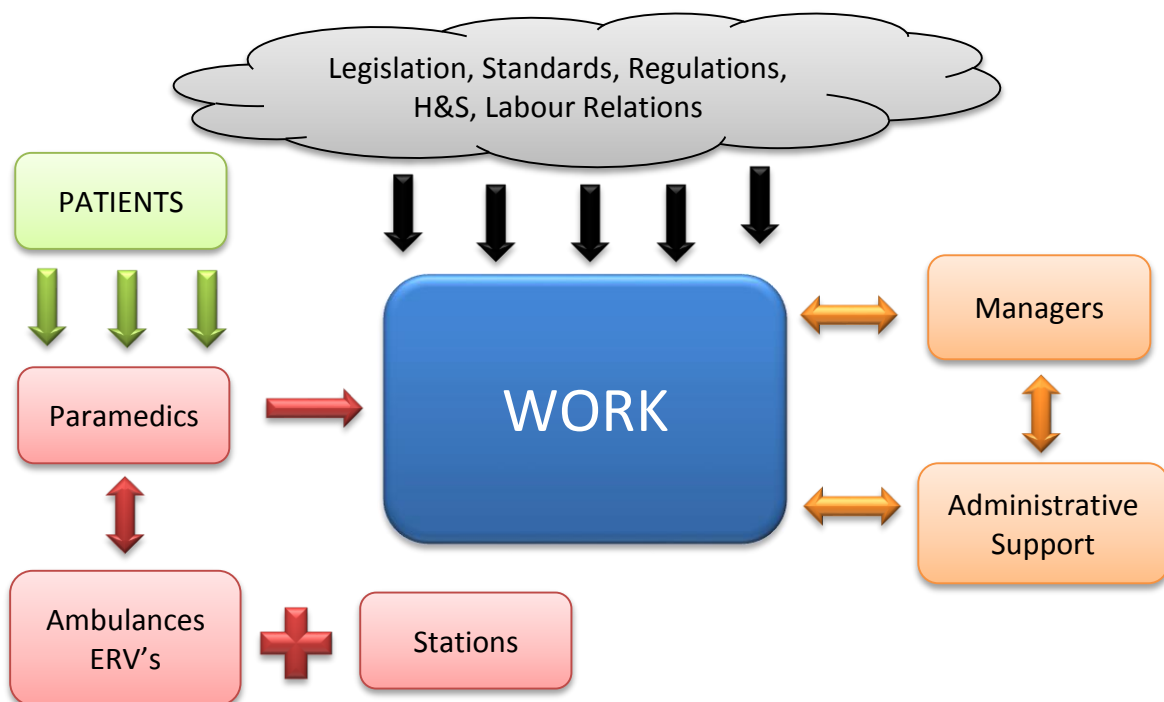
The above table illustrates that the wages of Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB Paramedics, while fair, consistently fall just below the average for PCP's in the North. Additionally, when compared to wage increases for the other 2 municipal emergency services it is noted that Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB is substantially below the average wage increases. On a 5 year average Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB has averaged a 2% wage increase. The average for EMS in the North is 2.05% and 2.9% for the province as a whole. The provincial average for fire services is 3.41% and for the OPP it is 3.29%. Overall, the review of EMS wages in comparison to Fire and Police reveals a fairly responsible trend on the EMS side. It

must be understood that Police and Fire do not have the right to strike and immediately go to interest arbitration if a bargained agreement cannot be arranged.

Paramedics also have access to interest arbitration since they do not have the ability to wage an effective strike due to essential services arrangements. In many cases, wage settlements are arbitrated. Municipalities and Labour Unions are at the mercy of the arbitrator whose job it is to determine what is fair and equitable. While being fair and equitable should be a good thing, what arbitrators will do is look to comparators when deciding what a fair wage increase would be. In certain circumstances this can be undesirable to both the employer and the employee depending on what is looking to be bargained. While Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB has not yet had to proceed to interest arbitration, it is a real possibility if a deal cannot be bargained between the parties. Current arbitrated wage settlements are within the range of the last freely bargained deal. The unknowns of interest arbitration though surround other operational and monetary language within a collective agreement.

### Neighbour Comparison

While at a recent conference first hand gathering of information was undertaken to gauge Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB's ability to manage the delivered services. A review of the systems employed by our Northern colleagues assists us in determining our efficiencies. To gauge operational efficiency we need to look to operational factors that would impact upon the ability to manage effectively. These issues can be broken down into human resources and capital resources. Human resources deals with managers, administrative support and employees. Capital resources include EMS stations, ambulances and response vehicles. In any business, work is generated. It is how an organization responds to this work that determines the successes and failures that the organization encounters. The following is a diagram that depicts how work is generated in the EMS Department.



Essentially work in the EMS department is driven by the paramedics. How much work occurs is a direct result of the service we provide to our citizens. Additionally, having paramedics means having ambulances and stations. There are many responsibilities surrounding these capital resources that also create work. Finally, you have legislation, standards, regulations, health & safety, and labour relations all placing pressure on the work that is being done. All of this work requires management and administrative support to ensure that it is being performed optimally. While managers and support personnel do generate work their main focus is to follow up and oversee the work being performed on the front lines. Review of what is being accomplished, correlation of data from generated work, and coordination of capital maintenance and repair are all required tasks of any organization.

Understanding that work within an EMS Department is created by front line resources and realizing that there are external factors driving the follow up of work, there is a requirement for managers and administrative support. In an effort to assess how we compare with our neighbours when it comes to organizational effort some ratios were explored. The following table represents a comparison of ratios dealing with the efficient operations of an EMS Department. A detailed explanation will follow.

<b>RATIOS</b>	<b>Northern Average</b>	<b>Average without Sudbury &amp; Thunder Bay</b>	<b>Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB</b>
<b>Managers per Station</b>	0.8 to 1	0.8 to 1	0.58 to 1
<b>Ambulances per Station</b>	2.7 to 1	2.8 to 1	1.92 to 1
<b>Managers per Administrative Support</b>	3.1 to 1	3.4 to 1	7.0 to 1
<b>Manager per Paramedic</b>	0.3 to 1	0.3 to 1	0.27 to 1
<b>Total Staff per Administrative Support</b>	14.7 to 1	16.6 to 1	33.0 to 1

Considering the above ratios, we are below the average in each one. We have:

- 0.58 managers per station as compared to a Northern average of 0.8 managers per station. This means that we have less supervisory support in relation to our stations than our colleagues. Therefore, each of our managers is responsible for more when it comes to the operations, management and upkeep of resources.
- 1.92 ambulances per station as compared to a Northern average of 2.7 ambulances per station. This means that on a per station basis we have less than the average number of ambulances. It can be suggested that we are not overly stocked on ambulances when compared to others in the North.
- 7 managers per administrative support person as compared to a Northern average of 3.1 managers per administrative support person. This means that others have over twice as much administrative support as we do.
- 0.27 managers per paramedic working at peak times during the day as compared to a Northern average of 0.3 managers per paramedic during the same timeframe. This means we have less managerial presence based on the number of staffed paramedics than others. Therefore, each manager is responsible for more of the workforce.

- 33.0 total staff per administrative support person as compared to a Northern average of 14.7 staff per administrative support person. This correlates at a higher level of discrepancy than the ratio above involving managers and administrative support. This essentially means that there are more people producing more work for the administrative support person. Over 50% less administrative help in relation to total workforce further means that administrative support assumes a greater level of responsibility.

Essentially looking at the ratios suggests that we are doing more with less. The current state of the EMS department is not overinflated and in reality can be considered quite lean in comparison to our closest colleagues.

## **Conclusion**

The EMS Department of Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB accounts for a large portion of the overall DSB budget and thus municipal apportionment. It is important that taxpayers get value for money spent. The above statistics show that we are managing quite efficiently.

The current state of this EMS department falls in line with others when compared to paramedic wages. We are geographically challenged with far reaching stations, paramedics, and vehicles. It is also demonstrated that we are managing a service with less means than our colleagues in the North.

The predicted future of healthcare and EMS in this province suggests that both usage and costs will continue to rise. Currently, we do our best to be as responsive as possible and are doing a good job at it however this does not mean that we should remain static. We must constantly re-evaluate and compare how we are doing in order to continually try not only to maintain the services we provide but to continue moving forward to do the best for the citizens we serve.