



Report To: Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board  
From: Paul Myre, Chief of Paramedic Services  
Date: April 22, 2021  
Re: **PeerConnect Pilot – Issue Report**

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## **Purpose**

To provide the Board with an update on the PeerConnect Pilot from the Ministry of Health.

## **Background**

Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB Paramedic Services continue to be engaged in Peer Support and self-care initiatives for our Paramedics. As an organization, we understand that a solid Peer Support system is one of the most effective means in mitigating the effects of occupational stress injuries. However, one significant challenge to how effective Peer Support systems can be is to be able to connect those in need in real time and to make sure that the right person is connected to the right resources. The Ministry of Health in partnership with the Ministry of the Solicitor General is funding a program that will see a peer support smart device application be deployed in our service for a one-year trial. The costs covered for this trial will include setup, training, maintenance, and licensing fees fully funded for one year's usage beginning Q1 2021.

Since the province is paying 100% of the first-year costs, the annualized ongoing cost for the program will be the responsibility of the DSB and if successful, staff will be included the costs in the 2022 budget deliberations.

## **PeerConnect Application - The Only Proactive Peer Support and Wellness Application**

The PeerConnect peer support program ensures all Paramedics and PTS staff have access to peer supports and are regularly checked-in on, ensuring no one falls through the cracks. This is a proactive approach that enables staff to live healthier, more supported lives during their employment.

Some of the features of the [PeerConnect App](#) include:

- Proactive Peer Support – fully comprehensive process
- Newsfeed – real time communication & engagement reports
- Recruitment – engages potential candidates to become part of the Peer Support Network
- Family Support – address the needs of family members of our employees
- Self-assessment – evidence-based tools in their pockets
- FAQs – lower anxiety barriers at point of resource interest
- Support for retirees and those on leave
- Mindfulness – modules specific to role and service
- Wellness resources – PTSD/PTSI, depression, substance abuse, harm reduction and prevention

## **Conclusion**

In summary, staff believe this simple application will enhance our Peer Support program and further improve the team's ability to respond and deploy early intervention protocols during occupational stress incidents. Additionally, the bolt on features of family supports, mindfulness and wellness resources will certainly be a welcome benefit to our frontline staff given the pressures all have been under during the pandemic. This no-cost pilot will allow staff to assess the efficacy of the application and whether or not this is an initiative that we can pursue and sustain on a go forward basis. Should the application prove beneficial, ongoing cost estimated to be \$7,000 per year will be included the 2022 budget deliberations.