



# Charting a New Course for Paramedic Services to do More for Healthcare

Governments, healthcare professionals and Ontarians want the same thing: **a seamless healthcare system that puts patients first.** However, as needs in every community become more complex, the system is facing pressures from hospital overcrowding, long-term care waitlists, increasing homelessness, the opioid crisis, interrupted access to primary care, disparities in First Nations communities and more. We need meaningful change, stronger collaboration and coordination, and more healthcare professionals who can deliver care in homes and in the community in ways that reach people where they are.

**Every day, paramedics are in communities across Ontario finding and implementing solutions that help relieve system pressures. There is more we can do.**

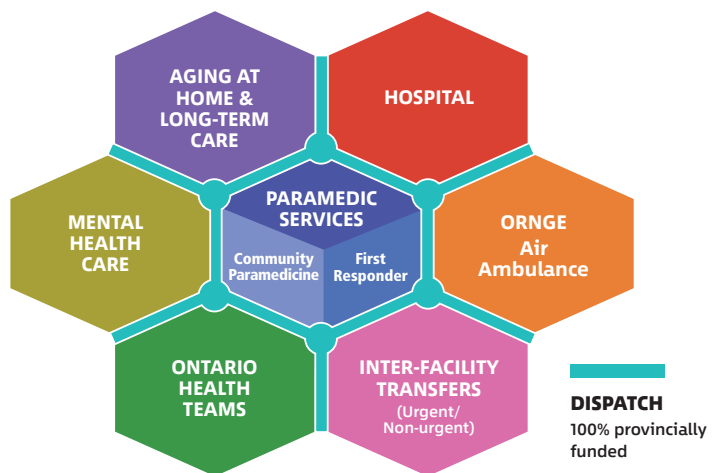
It's time to chart a new course for paramedics that embraces change, harnesses what we can offer, takes advantage of existing resources and expertise, and recognizes paramedics as on par with our healthcare colleagues. When we are participants at interdisciplinary decision-making tables and brought into the circle of care, we can deliver solutions that:

- ✔ Use resources more efficiently
- ✔ Reduce demands on hospital emergency rooms
- ✔ Offset the high costs of hospital use
- ✔ Increase standards and quality of care
- ✔ Are evidence-based best practice
- ✔ Improve patient outcomes and their quality of life

## Paramedics' unique role

We are the only health professional to sit at the centre of health care, public health, public safety and caring for an aging population. We are mobile and flexible to deliver expert care where it is needed. We are trusted in our communities, and we make proven positive impacts.

We are recognized for our ability to be innovative and nimble. We have created strong, collaborative local partnerships that help serve every community better. What we do has evolved in scope, breadth and complexity. Paramedics now provide a range of pre-hospital services, and are an extension of primary care, long-term care and public health services.



**Paramedicine has evolved. We need our systems, legislation and regulatory frameworks to evolve too.**

# The Path to Success: 3 Priority Actions

It's time for change. Time to remove barriers and put patients first. Time to elevate paramedicine and take advantage of our potential. The Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs recommends the following three high priority actions.

## 1. Include paramedics in the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and create a Regulatory College.

Grant paramedics the same self-regulation as other health professions such as nurses, midwives and massage therapists. Ontario can follow the lead of other provinces, and reduce red tape and bureaucratic layers within the Ministry of Health.

A college would:

- ✔ Increase public trust, safety and patient care;
- ✔ Increase paramedic standards, accountability and transparency that would achieve higher levels of performance, proficiency and care;
- ✔ Drive consistent service;
- ✔ Relieve pressures from base hospitals;
- ✔ Allow portability of credentials across the province... and more.

A self-regulating college for paramedics is long overdue.

## 2. Strengthen dispatch in every way.

Dispatch reform must be a priority. It brings the system together and is the coordination point. It should be a system navigator, improving patient care by putting the right resources in the right place at the right time considering local needs.

- a. Fast track the rollout of MPDS and all its components with flexibility at the local level.
- b. Create stronger integration with local paramedic services.
- c. Create a third party accreditation model for dispatch to ensure consistency and unbiased assessment.
- d. Allow municipal oversight at the communications centre to ensure the efficient use of resources.

## 3. Expand Community Paramedicine across the province and provide stable, coordinated funding.

To achieve seamless patient care, community paramedicine must be part of the answer. They allow communities to take advantage of the needed healthcare skills of paramedics to solve local challenges, and the evidence shows they are working:

- ✔ Patients diverted from emergency rooms: decreasing admission rates, length of stay and health system costs.
- ✔ Individuals staying at home longer: the cost-effectiveness of providing care in the home or in the community is indisputable. Staying at home is the preferred choice of virtually every patient.
- ✔ Access to needed primary community or home healthcare increases: relieving the burden on hospitals in communities where individuals use hospitals to meet their primary care needs.
- ✔ Inherent health equity issues are addressed.
- ✔ Critical gaps in service related to seasonal surge and influenza are filled.

Integrating community paramedicine into the healthcare system is cost efficient, uses resources wisely and meets community needs. It should be expanded to every community, including First Nations where these preventative programs can help address the social determinants of health.

**We have within our grasp the solutions to a seamless healthcare system that puts patients first. Charting a new course that better leverages paramedic unique expertise, mobility and innovation can be done.**