

Information Memo

To: Council-In-Committee Meeting
Date: June 12, 2025
Division: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Department: Paramedic Services
Ward: All Wards
Subject: Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) Implementation

Recommendation(s):

That the Information Memo regarding the Medical Priority Dispatch System Implementation be received as information.

Background

Starting November 5, 2025, Ambulance Communications Officers in the Hamilton Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) will adopt the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS). This change is intended to improve the deployment of paramedic resources to meet patient needs by matching resources with the clinical situation and prioritizing the most urgent calls to 9-1-1. Currently, Hamilton CACCs is reliant on a dispatching protocol known as Dispatch Priority Card Index (DPCI). With DPCI, low priority calls for ambulance services are often over-prioritized, depleting communities of valuable paramedic resources.

The MPDS is already in use in several regions across Ontario, including Toronto, Niagara, Mississauga, Kenora, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Renfrew, Georgian, Kingston and Lindsay CACCs.

Discussion:

With the MPDS, people in Norfolk County calling 9-1-1 can expect more detailed questions from Ambulance Communications Officers. These questions help emergency personnel gather specific information about a patient's condition to make quick and effective dispatch decisions. The tool is designed to help Ambulance Communication Officers understand a patient's level of urgency and triage them accordingly. This system allows the CACCs to match available paramedic resources with a patient's condition – ensuring that the right paramedic resources are appropriately dispatched and patients with life-threatening conditions receive care immediately. With the MPDS, 'lights and siren' resources are only provided for the most time-sensitive patients. Low-urgency incidents will be dispatched as soon as an appropriate ambulance is available and will receive follow-up call-backs to check on the patient's status. If the patient's status during the follow-up call requires immediate medical attention, a paramedic will be dispatched.

The MPDS is an evidence-based technology that has become the industry standard for patient triaging and is subject to ongoing testing, development, and quality assurance measures. The MPDS optimizes paramedic resources, prioritizing the most urgent 9-1-1 calls, and ensuring the right care at the right time for people in Norfolk County.

Key benefits of the MPDS include:

- Improving prioritization of life-threatening emergencies, (lights and sirens responses).
- Optimized use of paramedic resources, reducing over-prioritization of low urgency calls and alleviating strain on ambulance availability.
- A structured follow-up process for low-urgency calls, including call-backs to reassess patient conditions and dispatch services if the situation worsens.

Financial Services Comments:

As noted, this change is intended to address how Paramedic Services resources are deployed, however, this is not expected to impact overall operating costs. This change may affect resource allocations across municipal borders and any trends in expenses and recoveries for this type of service would be addressed in future operating budgets.

Attachment(s):

Conclusion:

The expansion of the MPDS is part of the Ontario government's *Your Health* plan, to ensure that paramedic services provide the right care at the right time, while easing pressures on emergency departments. This transition marks a significant step forward in enhancing emergency response capabilities and ensuring more efficient use of paramedic services across the region.

Approval:

Approved By:
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