Agenda – Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services – January 30, 2015

REPORTS

Item No. 1 Emergency Room Ambulance Wait Times

WINNIPEG PUBLIC SERVICE RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information.

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 24, 2014, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services requested that the Winnipeg Public Service report back at its January 30, 2015 meeting, with respect to what information is currently being provided on the amount of time required for the off-loading of patients into the care of hospital personnel and recommendations on what timely reporting could be provided on the matter.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: **Emergency Room Ambulance Wait Times**

Critical Path: **Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services**

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
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RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On November 24, 2014 the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services requested that the Winnipeg Public Service report back at its January 30, 2015 meeting with respect to what information is currently being provided on the amount of time required for the off-loading of patients into the care of hospital personnel and recommendations on what timely reporting could be provided on the matter.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

None

HISTORY

Emergency department (ED) wait times for ambulances (often known as “off-load delays”) have been an increasing phenomenon across the country for approximately the last 10 years. The root causes include a shift in the general population age demographic as “baby boomers” need more health care, budget challenges for health care delivery, and many other factors. This all translates into lack of available beds and capacity in EDs to receive and care for patients, whether they arrive by ambulance or other means.

Paramedics must continue to provide care for their patients on the ambulance stretchers in the ED corridors while awaiting the availability of space and staff to accommodate and care for their patient. The Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS) and Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) have engaged in a number of initiatives in an effort to assist in mitigating the off-load delay problem. Initiatives include the Emergency Paramedics in the Community (EPIC) pilot project, Transport Destination protocols ensuring patients are transported to the most appropriate site, Misericordia Urgent Care Centre protocol for non-emergency medical complaints that meet the protocol criteria, 911 caller referral of some non-emergent low acuity complaints to Health Links InfoSante, the mandatory pairing / doubling up of paramedic crews in off-load delay status to promptly return ambulances to available status and the assignment of patients in off-load delay to WRHA Inter-Facility Transport staff.

Despite these efforts and ongoing planning between the WFPS and WRHA Joint Operating Committee to address off-load delay, the problem persists.

The Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service continues to work very closely with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to deliver high quality emergency medical services (EMS) to the citizens of Winnipeg. Four new strategies to reduce off-load delays were discussed with the WRHA during November and December 2014.

On December 10, 2014 Council approved the following recommendations:

1. That the City enter into an extension agreement with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) for Emergency Medical Response Services, Inter-Facility Transport and Community Paramedicine, for the period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015, and such other agreements as determined necessary by the City Solicitor/Director of Legal Services to implement the intent of the foregoing.

2. That authority be delegated to the Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate and approve the terms and conditions of the extension agreement with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) for Emergency Medical Response Services, Inter-Facility Transport and Community Paramedicine, for the period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015, and such other agreements as determined necessary by the City Solicitor/Director of Legal Services to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Discussions are currently underway to renew the Service Purchase Agreement between the WFPS and the WRHA. With appropriate attention to the sensitivity of those contract discussions, the four strategies can be generally described as follows:

1. Increase the cost recovery from EDs where off-load delays occur.

2. Create a mechanism for quick mobilization of ambulances at EDs where significant off-load delay situations are occurring.

3. Create a mechanism to more appropriately distribute minor patients to the less busy EDs, thus reducing the overall patient load in the EDs where delays are occurring.

4. Create a mechanism to allow minor ambulance patients to wait in their homes with appropriate care and monitoring until the receiving ED is able to accommodate them.

As reported previously to Standing Committee, strategies 1 and 2 are more expedient measures that may help address off-load delays in specific locations on specific occasions. Strategies 3 and 4 are longer-term measures that may provide relief for the more systemic causes of off-load delay.

The WFPS continued to experience off-load delays during the weeks leading up to and including the time period over the December 2014 and January 2015 holiday season. During this period the WFPS staffed between one and three additional ambulances per shift at the request of the WRHA in an effort to offset the impact off-load delays were having on WFPS ambulance resource availability. All costs to the City associated with these additional resources are 100% recoverable from the WRHA.

The following data points provide indicators of EMS resource availability and off-load delay data for the month of November 2014:

Average minutes per day with no Ambulance in "Available" status:	3.71	(Average minutes per day)
Count of Billable Off-load Delay Patients:	833	(YTD 9,668)
Billable Off-load Delay hours:	1,042.32	(YTD 12,111.77)
Total Off-load Delay Invoice ($119.00/hr):	$124,036.08	(YTD 1,442,202.65)

Percent of Total Dollars Invoiced by Facility / Hospital:

Facility	November 2014	YTD
Children's	0.0%	0.0%
Concordia	7.1%	5.2%
Grace General	2.7%	6.0%
Health Sciences	44.7%	32.6%
Misericordia Urgent Care	0.0%	0.0%
Seven Oaks General	26.9%	28.6%
St. Boniface General	18.1%	23.7%
Victoria General	0.5%	3.9%

In addition to the four initiatives previously mentioned, in January 2015 the WFPS senior leadership will be meeting with WRHA representatives who are responsible for the regional emergency department program for the purposes of outlining the impacts that off-load delays are having on the WFPS fire and paramedic resources both from an operational and financial perspective. Following this the WFPS will be taking steps to meet with the senior leadership at all Winnipeg hospitals with immediate emphasis placed on Health Sciences, Seven Oaks and St. Boniface to ensure the hospital leadership has a complete understanding of the impacts that the off-load delays at their sites has on the fire and paramedic resources in the community that the hospital serves.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement **Date:** January 15, 2015

Project Name: Emergency Room Ambulance Wait Times

COMMENTS:
There are no financial impacts associated with the recommendations of this report.

original signed by
John Hall, ACMA, CGMA
Controller, Finance
Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service

CONSULTATION

In preparing this report there was consultation with:

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Fire Paramedic Service
Division: Administration
Prepared by: Christian Schmidt
Date: January 15, 2015
File No.