

Corporate Report

REPORT NUMBER 097-2025-Community Services-Superior North EMS

DATE

PREPARED

March 11, 2025

FILE

MEETING DATE

March 24, 2025

SUBJECT

Superior North EMS Work Plan Annual Update – 2024-2025

RECOMMENDATION

WITH RESPECT to Report 097-2025 Community Services – Superior North EMS, we recommend that item 2023-006-ADM Work Plan Annual Update – Superior North EMS 2021-2023 Master Plan be removed from the Outstanding List - Administrative Services;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This report is aligned with the Safety and Well-Being strategic pillar of the City's Strategic Plan "Maamawe, Growing Together" through the implementation of system-wide recommendations designed to further quality of life for all communities served by Superior North EMS (SNEMS) and advocacy initiatives to enhance health services to meet community needs.

This report also provides an update on efforts aligned with the Growth strategic pillar as the Work Plan includes many service improvements that focus on capacity building, efficiencies and positive outcomes for those who require SNEMS' services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2021-2030 Master Plan for the Superior North Emergency Medical Service (SNEMS) was received by Committee of the Whole on January 25, 2021. This report presents updates in respect of the SNEMS work plan implementation since the last update in October 2023 (Report 296-2023) including key performance measures, performance targets and progress to improve District and City operations. SNEMS demonstrates continued progress in implementing Work Plan initiatives arising from the Master Plan and achieving excellence in the delivery of health services to meet community needs.

DISCUSSION

The SNEMS Work Plan addresses system-wide recommendations contained in the Master Plan as well as recent Ministry of Health initiatives.

District Operations

Updates to the implementation of the seven Work Plan modules linked to Master Plan recommendations include:

1. North Shore Non-Urgent Transportation
2. North Shore Base Consolidation: Nipigon/Red Rock
3. North Shore Base Consolidation: Schreiber/Terrace Bay
4. Beardmore Ambulance Redeployment
5. Beardmore Community Paramedicine Initiative
6. Advocating for First Nations “Fair Funding” for Nakina and Longlac
7. Supporting the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Paramedic Service/Community Paramedicine Initiative.

North Shore Non-Urgent Transportation

SNEMS has initiated discussions with district stakeholders and service providers to expand Non-Urgent Transportation services. There is unanimous consensus to increase these services, which would help reduce the strain on 911 resources and improve access to health care services, including the repatriation of patients between health care facilities. Superior North EMS will take the lead in submitting a business proposal to the Ministry of Health to support the expansion of non-urgent transportation services in the Thunder Bay district. Since the implementation of these services, notable successes have been achieved; however, the recent trend demonstrates increasing demand.

SNEMS Transportation of Medically Stable Patients are as noted below (number of transfers):

2021: 2,454
2022: 2,293
2023: 1,707
2024: 1,973.

North Shore Base Consolidation: Nipigon/Red Rock

Administration has received proposals from the municipalities regarding potential property/site options. Call volumes and emergency response data have been analysed by Superior North EMS. SNEMS will be implementing next steps in station consolidation after the tender of the North Shore station in Terrace Bay.

North Shore Base Consolidation: Schreiber/Terrace Bay

The Master Plan recommended the consolidation of the existing Schreiber and Terrace Bay stations into one consolidated station. Neither of the existing bases meet the regulatory or functional requirements nor are they large enough to accommodate the amalgamation of staff and equipment from both existing facilities. Terrace Bay has been identified as the primary site location for the new construction of the North Shore EMS station. This decision was based on location of calls, call volumes, acuity of responses and utilization of ambulance resources. The strategic location of the station will allow for Paramedics to have the lowest response time to the majority of high acuity responses. Consensus has been reached by both Schreiber and Terrace Bay communities to locate a new station in Terrace Bay. A high level building program has been developed but detailed design is required. This new station would serve Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Pays Plat First Nation, and surrounding areas and provide better working conditions for seasoned and new paramedics in our region. The next step is to explore with Terrace Bay the construction and maintenance of a new and modernized ambulance base on lands owned by Terrace Bay.

Beardmore Ambulance Redeployment

In March of 2023, staff and asset relocation from Beardmore to Longlac took place to increase emergency coverage and better utilize available resources. This reallocation of resources was based on evidence of high call volume in Longlac with a disproportionate and unsustainable utilization of resources. Below is information to date on 5-year average calls 2020-2024:

- 97 calls in Beardmore
- 803 calls in Longlac.

EMS activations along the corridor between Nipigon and Geraldton/Longlac are promptly addressed by the most appropriate and geographically closest unit, based on the patient's acuity level. Patient transportation to designated community hospitals is coordinated based on the required level of care and assigned by the Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC).

Beardmore Community Paramedicine Initiative

The Beardmore Community Paramedic/First Response initiative became operational in May 2023.

From 2023 to 2024, Community Paramedicine (CP) in Beardmore completed 243 home visits, conducted 520 assessments and referrals, and provided 192.3 hours of services to 11 CP clients.

SNEMS will be exploring options to expand CP to support the region, i.e. Red Rock, Nipigon, Dorion, Hurkett, Lake Helen as well as Beardmore. This would allow for an

increased client load and better support overall community health initiatives in the region.

Advocating for First Nations “Fair Funding” for Nakina and Longlac

The Ministry of Health provided \$1,500,000 in baseline funding in 2023 to the City of Thunder Bay for the enhancement of ambulance coverage through the Land Ambulance Services Grant (LASG). SNEMS has directed the application of this funding to support expansion of services at the Longlac and Marathon stations for the 2023-2025 calendar years to provide enhanced service to First Nation communities.

Supporting the NAN Paramedic Service/Community Paramedicine Initiative

Health transformation for First Nations communities continues to make marked advancement. Independent First Nation Alliance (IFNA) has launched its first Paramedic Service in Pikangikum. They will be expanding services as health transformation continues to develop. SNEMS has been supporting the service throughout the process and continues to have regular communication with IFNA Paramedic Services leadership. Ornge has recently been appointed to develop First Response capabilities throughout the northern First Nations. SNEMS will be supporting the development of this initiative and continues regular communication with the Director of the program.

System-wide Work Plan Elements

Evaluation and Performance Measurement

SNEMS continues to monitor and analyze a number of key factors regarding system utilization, including call demand, times for transfer of patient care, and the triage of emergency calls.

SNEMS has mitigated the increasing demand for 911 medical resources through a combination of proactive community health initiatives, a modern dispatch system, and strategic deployment plan adjustments.

In 2024, SNEMS successfully met the Response Time Targets reported to the Ministry of Health.

From 2022 to 2024, SNEMS achieved a 20% reduction in the number of Ambulance Call Reports:

- 2022: 34,915
- 2023: 32,549
- 2024: 27,936.

The successful implementation of the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) has played a key role in alleviating pressure on the 911 system by improving the allocation

of resources based on patient acuity. In 2023, 99.76% of all dispatched emergency calls were triaged as high-acuity responses. As a result of ongoing dispatch system improvements, SNEMS has reduced high-acuity responses by 42%.

This reduction in high-acuity calls has allowed SNEMS to better allocate resources, ensuring that units are available for the most critical emergencies. Additionally, it has facilitated improved management of paramedic meal breaks, minimized shift overruns, and helped to alleviate the surge of low-acuity patients transported to emergency departments. This, in turn, has significantly reduced offload delay hours, which decreased by 36% from 7,382.34 hours in 2022 to 4,721.35 hours in 2024.

Superior North EMS 2025 Strategic Priorities

Superior North EMS has established five key strategic priorities for the 2025 Work Plan, targeting areas essential to delivering high-quality emergency services:

1. Workforce Development
2. Infrastructure and Equipment
3. Community Health Initiatives
4. Technology Integration
5. Sustainability and Funding.

Workforce Development

Workforce Development will focus on building a highly skilled, adaptable paramedic workforce through continuous training and retention initiatives. Key strategies will include attracting and recruiting skilled paramedics, optimizing staffing levels, and meeting the growing demands for health care and emergency services. SNEMS has successfully implemented a digital media strategy to engage potential paramedic recruits, while also leveraging social media to promote the paramedic lifestyle and raise community awareness.

The strategy will further encompass specialized training in mental health support, operational stress injury recognition, situational awareness, and de-escalation techniques. The mental health and well-being of paramedics will remain a central focus, helping to build resilience and reduce WSIB-related lost time injuries.

Paramedic Mental Health Support:

NWO Psychology (Dedicated Clinical Team):

- baseline assessments
- early detection
- accurate diagnosis
- short-term treatment
- connections to long-term treatment.

NWO Psychology Key Performance Indicators (2024):

- 313 clinical hours
- 128 appointments between December 2023 and December 2024
- 10 leadership meetings to enhance organizational wellness
- 9 briefing notes to support psychological well-being
- 7 resource types shared with team members
- 6 critical incident stress debriefings
- 5 educational videos
- 4 meetings with the CTB
- 3 Peer Support Training sessions
- 2 district visits.
- updated Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) plan.

Additional SNEMS/CTB Initiatives:

- full-time Peer Support and Wellness Coordinator
- Peer Support Teams
- Health and Wellness Committee
- \$2,000 mental health benefit for full-time employees, in addition to contract benefits
- 24/7 Employee and Family Assistance Program
- Critical Incident Checklist policies and procedures for management
- External Violence Against Paramedics (EVAP) program.

Infrastructure and Equipment

Infrastructure and Equipment improvements will be focused on fleet and facility upgrades to ensure operational readiness and provide paramedics with modern tools to deliver exceptional patient care. Strategic deployment of EMS resources will be essential to maintaining emergency coverage and meeting response time targets. Noteworthy milestones include the completion of new stations in Oliver Paipoonge and Shuniah, with Shuniah becoming the newest operational base in January 2024.

Key Infrastructure Highlights:

- Oliver Paipoonge Operational in 2021
- Shuniah Station Operational in 2024
- Northshore Station progress in 2025.

Community Health Initiatives

The Community Health Initiatives will place a strong emphasis on prevention, education, and expanding public health outreach. The goal is to reduce emergency situations and improve chronic disease management, thereby alleviating pressure on emergency departments and reducing 911 call volumes. Moreover, expanding mental health and addiction services through multidisciplinary teams will enhance responses to low-acuity mental health and addiction-related calls.

In 2024, SNEMS completed 5,669.26 hours of Community Health Initiatives with 6,684 home visits and 13,228 assessment and referrals to allied health care organizations.

Key Community Health Initiatives:

- Specialized Treatment and Alternative Response Team (STAR): A collaborative team of paramedics, mental health crisis workers, and Indigenous associates, equipped to respond to mental health and addiction calls in the community.
- Community Paramedicine – Long-Term Care (CP-LTC): A program designed to support vulnerable individuals, enabling them to remain safe and healthy in their homes while awaiting placement in long-term care facilities.
- Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM): A home-based monitoring system for patients with chronic conditions, empowering self-management through professional coaching and feedback.
- Chronic Disease Management (CDM): Ongoing support and care for individuals living with chronic health conditions.
- Superior Connect: A community paramedic partnership with the Lakehead Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic aimed at connecting patients without family doctors to primary healthcare, reducing reliance on 911 and emergency departments.
- Post-Falls Pathway: In partnership with the Rehabilitative Care Alliance, this initiative provides a rehabilitative care pathway for older adults living with frailty who require community paramedicine services but do not need patient transport.

Technology Integration

Technology integration has played a pivotal role in enhancing the efficiency of paramedic services, as well as ensuring the health and safety of both employees and patients. By leveraging advanced software solutions and state-of-the-art medical equipment, Superior North EMS has continually improved its service delivery.

Notable advancements include:

- DOTY – Lift Assist Harness
- pelvic binders
- Mobile Computer Aided Dispatch (mCAD) mapping software
- ongoing improvements to the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS)
- UKG Scheduling Software
- Operative IQ Asset Management
- Stryker Power Pro 2 Stretchers.

Sustainability and Funding

Superior North EMS has successfully secured substantial funding to support the continued enhancement of services and programs:

- \$750,801 in additional base funding for the 50:50 partnership with LASG for the 2024 calendar year.
- \$2,742,000 in funding through the Addictions Recovery Fund (ARF) from 2024 to 2026, designated to support the SNEMS STAR team initiative.
- \$2,039,655 for the 2024/25 fiscal year, with up to \$2,128,500 allocated for 2025/26, to ensure the continued operation of the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care (CPLTC) program.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

There are no direct financial implications in receiving this report for information. Any financial implications related to the evaluation of operational and capital requirements as noted would be brought forward where required through the budget process.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that Administration shall continue to implement action items in the Superior North EMS Master Plan and utilize the Plan as a guiding document.

Administration intends to provide updates on work plan implementation on an annual basis.

BACKGROUND

The 2021-2030 Master Plan for the Superior North Emergency Medical Service (SNEMS) was received by Committee of the Whole on January 25, 2021 (Report R8/2021). The overriding patient-centric principles that informed the Master Plan are as follows:

1. SNEMS must deploy its finite resources in a rational and responsible manner that safeguards the greatest number of current and future pre-hospital patients – regardless of where they reside in Thunder Bay or the District.
2. SNEMS is obligated to consider “best efforts” mitigation of any potential adverse impacts on existing communities/populations in the course of its evidence-based deployment of resources.

A draft work plan was presented on June 14, 2021 (Report 78/2021 - Development & Emergency Services – Superior North EMS), which was followed by additional consultation with District stakeholders.

On July 25, 2022, Committee of the Whole received Report 133/2022 (Development & Emergency Services – Superior North EMS) pertaining to the Work Plan for Superior North EMS 2021-2030 Master Plan (the “Work Plan”).

On August 8, 2022, further to Report 133/2022 (Development & Emergency Services – Superior North EMS), Thunder Bay City Council ratified recommendations of the Superior North EMS work plan regarding the following seven key issues:

1. North Shore Non-Urgent Transportation
2. North Shore Base Consolidation: Nipigon/Red Rock
3. North Shore Base Consolidation: Schreiber/Terrace Bay
4. Beardmore Ambulance Redeployment
5. Beardmore Community Paramedicine Initiative
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City Council further directed that an annual update report be presented starting in Q3 2023.

Council received an update at their October 30, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting (Report 296-2023-Corporate Services-Superior North EMS) and resolved that the next update be received by March 30, 2025.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

None

REPORT PREPARED BY

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REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Kelly Robertson, Commissioner, Community Services

Date (03/14/2025)