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Report 2024-121

Report Title: Dedicated Off Load Nursing Program Funding 2024 / 2025

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Reviewed by: Jennifer Moore
CAO

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: September 18, 2024

**Report Not Considered by
Standing Committee Because:**

- Time-sensitive Issue (information received too late for Committee consideration)
- Urgent Matter (issue arose after this month's Committee meeting)
- Other

Strategic Plan Priorities: Innovate for Service Excellence
 Ignite Economic Opportunity
 Foster a Thriving Community
 Propel Sustainable Growth
 Champion a Vibrant Future

Recommendation

"That County Council receive Report 2024-121 'Dedicated Off Load Nursing Program Funding 2024 / 2025' for information."

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update regarding the application for Dedicated Off-Load Funding for the 2024/25 funding year.

The funding allocation is no longer embargoed, as the Minister's announcement in the media took place on September 12, 2024. The announcement of our funding allocation is less than the

original request. Requesting direction and advocacy to appeal to the Ministry of Health for the full amount of our application.

Background

The Dedicated Off Load Nursing program (DONP) is a funded program offered by the Ministry of Health (MOH)– Emergency Health Services Branch (EHSB) to provide relief with respect to persistent Ambulance Off Load pressures at specific hospitals Emergency Departments (ED) to reduce the number of ambulances experiencing off load delays and to return as many ambulances as quickly as possible back to the community.

Paramedic Services are invited to submit an application / Business plan annually to receive one-time funding annually for hospitals in their catchment area. The invitation is normally received in January with the initial submission due February/March. The funding year of this program runs on the fiscal year cycle, (April 1 to March 31 of subsequent year).

The challenges continue to be the timing of the application compared to the confirmation of the one-time funding amount which is usually received 4-6 months later. This delay causes the inability to utilize the full funding amount, and the inability to take full advantage of the DONP, with continued off load delays experienced at the hospitals transported to.

Consultations

Performance Measurement and Data Analytics (PMDA) Ministry of Health (MOH)

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

DONP funding assists with the off-loading of patients brought in by ambulances to respective emergency departments. This allows ambulances to return to the state of readiness faster and more efficiently to provide emergency coverage to the county.

Off-Load delays at hospitals lead to lost operational hours and increased response times in the county. Time is of the essence when responding to all life-threatening calls. Paramedics held in hospitals to continue the care and treatment of their patients directly impacts their ability to provide emergency care to the community.

Discussion / Options

The DONP program has been in effect since 2008 and available to urban cities and hospitals throughout Ontario. In in November 2022, Northumberland County - Paramedics received their first invite to apply for DONP funding program for the 2022/23 fiscal year. Applications for new services to apply for the 2022/23 funding were due in December 2022. An application was submitted for off load nursing program funding for both Northumberland Hills hospital (NHH) and for Campbellford Memorial Hospital (CMH) for a nurse 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. We received our funding announcement February 2023 in the amount of \$102,783.00. These funds had to be utilized by the end of the fiscal year – March 31, 2023. The short timing required an agreement between the Service and the hospital, and hiring of a nurse at the hospital. These tight timelines only allowed for six (6) weeks of implementation at NHH, and unfortunately implementation was not possible at CMH due to staffing issues.

Northumberland Paramedics received an invitation from MOH- EHSB on April 26, 2023, to apply for 2023/24 DONP funding. An application was submitted for NHH and CMH for one (1) nurse, 12 hours a day x 7 days a week. The funding announcement was received August 30, 2023, in

the amount of \$493,120. NHH implemented the off-load nursing program September 1, 2023, and CMH implemented the off-load nursing program February 18, 2024, due to staffing shortages. All funding had to be utilized prior to March 31, 2024, and any remaining was recovered by the Ministry.

Northumberland Paramedics received an invitation from MOH – EHSB on January 30, 2024, for the 2024/25 funding year. An application was completed and submitted once again for a nurse 12 hours a day x 7 days a week at both NHH, and CMH in the amount of \$586,595.00. Northumberland County received a funding announcement on August 22, 2024, for \$163,800.00 under an embargo direction. This has resulted in a difference of \$422,709.38 in funding.

Funding Year (April-March)	Invite to Apply	Submission Due	Requested Funding	Announcement for funding	Funding Amount	Balance
2022/23	Sept 23 2022	Oct 21 2022	\$102,783	Jan 12, 2023 – revised budget submit. Feb 22 2023	\$102,783	\$93,000+
2023/24	April 26 2023	May 26 2023	\$493,120	August 30 2023	\$493,120	\$303,595 +
2024/25	Jan 30 2024	March 8 2024	\$586,595	August 22, 2024 Revise by Sept 12, 2024	\$163,800	\$422,709.38 -

Timing is a challenge with the DONP funding. There is a 4–6-month delay between the time the invitation, application and announcement. This delay results in the inability to take full advantage of this funding program and its benefit to our community resulting in returning unspent funds or implementing the program at hospitals prior to secured funding and resulting in a potential deficit to the hospitals.

DONP funding is beneficial to the Paramedic Service, and the hospitals by increasing the capacity of the hospitals to off load ambulances thereby returning their availability to the community and availability to respond to the emergency 911 calls that take place in the community.

Financial Impact

DONP is one-time funding, under current timelines, annual announcement of funding is required prior to implementation, there is no guaranteed funding amount.

Member Municipality Impacts

All municipalities will experience increased response times as Paramedics may experience increased off load delays at hospitals awaiting to transfer care of their patients.

Conclusion / Outcomes

Staff recommends advocating to receive the full amount of funding applied for \$586,509.38 minus the amount awarded \$163,800.00 for the remaining balance of \$422,709.38.

Attachments

1. Report 2024-121 ATTACH 1 'Funding Letter'