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**MEMORANDUM**

**PHD-C 2-2021**

**Subject:** Niagara Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Temporary Funded Opportunities

**Date:** February 16, 2021

**To:** Public Health & Social Services Committee

**From:** Kevin Smith, Chief

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Niagara EMS has been requested by several Provincial Ministries to provide expanded community health services in response to the health and social impacts of COVID-19. These initiatives, 100% funded by the Province, enhance the new Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) model of service delivery in Niagara making the addition of these resources complimentary to existing services and timely implementation possible within the existing framework.

The purpose of this memo is to provide a brief summary of each of the initiatives for your awareness. While these programs are fully funded for a short period (with the exception of one initiative that is for three years) it is staff's intention to secure on-going funding from the Province should the program meet the intended objectives. Staff are also seeking the Ministry to provide exit strategies should funding not continue so that members of the community who may become dependent on these programs do not suddenly lose their critical supports without transition to alternatives.

Staff will provide more formal reports to Committee and Council upon request or as required on the following activities:

**Mental Health and Addictions Team (MHART) Expansion**

- Funding Period: November 6, 2020 - March 31 2021
- Funding Source: \$56,413 from LHIN Mental Health and Addictions Funding

Adding a second MHART resource in the community allows Niagara EMS to provide greater mental health and addictions coverage geographically to the residents of Niagara who are struggling with mental health, addictions and homelessness.

This initiative is part of a creative partnership with Quest Community Health Centre. Quest employs mental health nurses as part of the Urgent Service Access Team (USAT), and offered to temporarily share two of their nurses with MHART during this temporary expansion. They are teamed up with an advanced care paramedic, and together, they address the demand for low acuity 911 mental health and addictions related calls and challenges in real time. This is a great example of collaboration between local health care organizations that will ultimately improve service to patients seeking mental health services while in short-term crisis and longer term in the community.

### **Community Outreach**

- Funding Period: November 6, 2020 - March 31 2021
- Funding Source: \$74,748 from LHIN Mental Health and Addictions Funding

This initiative is supporting individuals who are experiencing homelessness or living within the shelter system. These clients are increasingly medically complex, and resources available to support them are limited and not often accessible in a timely manner. Two community paramedics have been recruited to form a street outreach team. In collaboration with Niagara Assertive Street Outreach (NASO) and local partners, they will provide proactive mobile medical services to individuals who are living rough and need support.

### **High Intensity Supports at Home (HISH)**

- Funding Period: November 12 2020 - March 31 2021
- Funding Source: \$218,469 from LHIN (Home and Community Care)

Niagara EMS, in partnership with HNHB LHIN Home and Community Care (HCC) Services, has one Community Paramedic (CP) and one Emergency Communications Nurse (ECN) in the NEMS Communications Center working collaboratively to support and respond to scheduled and unscheduled requests for services for HISH program clients. The CP is available to HCC and the HISH program 12 hours a day, seven days a week. The ECN role includes Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) and following up with patients by phone if they have abnormal results. They also perform regular wellness checks with patients over the phone, to assess the patient's current health and wellbeing. This is a proactive way of staying connected with complex patients who are referred to us, and to prevent progression of health problems to needing acute intervention, rather than waiting for patients to call 911 during a crisis. The CP also

monitors low acuity 911 dispatch calls for known HISH clients and responds to those unscheduled emergency requests for service.

### **Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care**

- Funding Period: April 1, 2021 - March 31, 2024
- Funding Source: Up to \$3 Million/Year for each of the three years from Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care

This program will carry on and expand the work begun under the HISH initiative above, extending and significantly enhancing opportunities for integrated support from Niagara EMS Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Paramedics, remote patient monitoring, as well as Emergency Communications Nurses. It is intended to provide services to individuals who are waiting for placement in a long-term care (LTC) home, or who are soon to be eligible for long-term care. The purpose of the program is to keep these individuals stabilized in their illness trajectory and in their own homes for as long as possible and avoid hospitalization. The program will do this through EMS-led preventive and responsive care, such as home visits and remote patient monitoring. Designed with a focus on health integration, the program will be coordinated with existing health services from across the Niagara region, including the HNHB LHIN (home and community care), residential long-term care, emergency care, primary care and other community/social services.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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Kevin Smith  
Chief/Director  
Niagara Emergency Medical Services