



**Paramedic Association of Canada
Association des Paramedics du Canada**

**Federal Pre-Budget Submission to the
Standing Committee on Finance**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Health care and public safety are important priorities for Canadians. Paramedics are innovators in health care and positive contributors to safe communities. Paramedics are able to respond to the needs of our communities and the crises that occur.

The Paramedic Association of Canada (PAC) recognizes that promoting paramedic mental health and wellness is good public policy. We need assistance from government to blunt the crisis of the paramedic being injured while providing service to the community.

Paramedics are on the front line of the opioid crisis. We see the harm to our communities. We believe that paramedics can play an important role in prevention, harm reduction, and the treatment continuum.

PAC recognizes gaps in the provision of health care to our communities and particularly indigenous communities. Community paramedics are innovators who provide health care that meets the tenets of the Triple Aim: better health for the population, better care for the individual, at a lower cost.

PAC is pleased to make the following recommendations to the committee on behalf of paramedics across Canada:

PARAMEDIC MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government establish a Canadian Institute for Public Safety Officer Health Research.
- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government support organization a national mental health prevalence survey by the new Canadian Institute for Public Safety Officer Health Research in collaboration with Statistics Canada.

OPIOIDS

- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government invest in improving pre-hospital overdose data collection.
- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government support better treatment options for patients using opioids.
- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government support the development of out-of-hospital national standards for the treatment of patients using opioids.

COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE

- **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Government invest in a national Community Paramedic Strategy in conjunction with the provincial and territorial governments.
- **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Government employ community paramedic pilot programs in remote Indigenous communities across Canada.

ABOUT THE PARAMEDIC ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

The Paramedic Association of Canada (PAC) is a voluntary professional organization of paramedics. Its mission is to advance the profession throughout Canada. It remains the voice of paramedicine which supports medics in providing high quality health care to patients. PAC affiliates with managers, unions and other stakeholders in the health field.

PAC represents over 40,000 paramedics in communities across Canada through its provincial chapters. These health care professionals are available 7 days/week, 24 hours/day providing primary, advanced and critical care to patients. Paramedics also provide community care and a vital link between the home and the hospital.

Approximately 95% of Canadians will require the presence and care of a paramedic at some point in their life. The profession does not come without risk. Medics are at high risk of injuries, contagion and hazards on their physical and mental health.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING PARAMEDICINE

Paramedic Mental Health and Wellness

Paramedics are exposed to psychological stress and traumatic events each day. These first responders support the 16 recommendations from the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (SECU) study on *Operational Stress Injuries and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders in Public Safety Officers and First Responders*.

In a recent survey of paramedics across Canada (6,000), PAC discovered the following:

- 30% of respondents have contemplated suicide.
- 60% of paramedics know of a paramedic colleague that have contemplated suicide.
- 70% of paramedics are concerned that a paramedic colleague is at risk for suicide.

These first responders play a critical role in maintaining the health and safety of our communities. Paramedics risk their own health and wellness to protect Canadians.

The SECU's Report recommendations should be actioned immediately to support first responders who dedicate their lives to preserving and promoting health of Canadians.

PAC also makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government establish a Canadian Institute for Public Safety Officer Health Research.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government support organization a national mental health prevalence survey by the new Canadian Institute for Public Safety Officer Health Research in collaboration with Statistics Canada.

OPIOIDS

First responders have been at the forefront of the opioid crisis in communities across Canada. This epidemic has gripped all levels of government to determine an appropriate response. First responders of all stripes have had to determine appropriate protocols to protect staff who are at the frontlines of this epidemic.

PAC had the opportunity to participate in the Opioid Summit and highlighted our commitment to take action on combating opioids in our communities from coast to coast.

Paramedics also support the Government of Canada's 5 step opioid action plan. Health Canada's action on Opioid Misuse must include front line medics.

Canada must also improve data collection on drugs that are being consumed, the number of patients presenting to emergency rooms and the number of users treated by paramedics prior to arriving in emergency rooms. There is currently no standardized reporting across Canada.

PAC also supports *An Act to Amend The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act*.

Paramedics in British Columbia alone have experienced the following:

- 1) 120 suspected drug overdose deaths in March, 2017, which represents a 51.9% increase over the number of deaths the previous year.
- 2) The number of illicit drug overdose deaths in Vancouver in March, 2017 (120) equates to about 3.9% deaths per day for the month.

PAC makes the following recommendations to the Committee:

- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government invest in improving pre-hospital overdose data collection.
- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government support better treatment options for patients using opioids.
- **RECOMMENDATION:** That Government support the development of out-of-hospital national standards for the treatment of patients using opioids.

COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE

Paramedics believe that all Canadians could benefit from the addition of Community Paramedics to existing health care programs across the country. Paramedics have the knowledge, skills and training to provide non-urgent health care services to patients.

Community paramedicine is an innovative and emerging healthcare profession that allows paramedics to operate in expanded roles to provide routine healthcare services to underserved populations. It fills a gap in our healthcare system, particular in rural areas or those facing strained health care resources.

Provinces like Ontario, Nova Scotia and British Columbia have made investments in community paramedicine to improve access to home care and community support services. These critical investments will support the federal government and its goal of expanded home care and additional support for our aging population.

More can always be done as paramedics can provide care in rural and remote populations and to Indigenous communities across Canada. Community paramedicine can also be deployed in times of crisis and disaster, to provide refugee care, immunization and critical end of life care.

In addition to the delivery of urgent and emergency care, paramedics can also provide:

- Home visits to seniors and high-needs patients;
- Follow-up care to patients discharged from hospitals;
- Education for patients managing chronic disease;
- Referrals to local services in the community such as Community Care and Health Centres;
- Emergency Department Triage.

Community paramedicine programs have been part of national healthcare landscapes for over two decades in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Given the opportunity for innovation and greater improvements in health care delivery, PAC makes the following recommendations to the Committee:

- **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Government invest in a national Community Paramedic Strategy in conjunction with provincial and territorial governments.
- **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Government employ community paramedic pilot programs in remote Indigenous communities across Canada.