

Community Paramedic Program to continue for 2 more years after \$1.8 million investment



Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those managing chronic illnesses can be reassured they'll continue to get support in Dufferin County as the Community Paramedic Program receives additional funding.

The County of Dufferin and Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) announced in a joint statement on Tuesday (April 2), that the Community Paramedic Program had received a two-year \$1.8 million investment from the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

"Our team is so pleased for this Community Paramedic funding announcement; it will ensure that we will be able to support the most vulnerable members and families in our community," said Tom Reid, Chief of Dufferin County Paramedic Services. "Through this funding, [we] will continue to work with our patient's primary care physicians and community service partners to ensure they receive excellent care and support in the safety of their own homes."

Kim Delahunt, president and CEO of Headwaters, said, "The Dufferin County Community Paramedic Program represents a groundbreaking approach to healthcare delivery. It empowers paramedics to use their expertise in non-emergency care roles, ultimately improving the quality of life for those individuals enrolled and helps them remain in their homes safely for longer periods and avoids unnecessary hospital visits."

An initiative focused on non-emergency, community-based healthcare, the Dufferin County Community Paramedic Program, was launched a decade ago. The program facilitates easier access to care for vulnerable populations in Dufferin County within the comfort of their homes by providing services aimed at health promotion, system navigation, and injury prevention.

Through the program, community paramedics conduct a wide range of services including wellness checks, safe home assessments, remote patient monitoring, and administering medication. Community paramedics act as an extension of a patient's primary care providers.

"As a local family doctor, I have several homebound patients that are seen regularly by the community paramedics. After the visit, the community paramedics do a home visit, they communicate their assessment to me, which then allows me to adjust medications or to start early treatments," explained Dr. Karen A. P. Sandhu, a family physician in Orangeville.

?This has been an effective strategy at reducing Emergency Room Visits by these patients, who may have previously needed to go to the ER frequently. This program continues to evolve and pivot depending on the needs of the community,? she added.

According to the County and Headwaters, community paramedics conducted 2,042 in-home visits, 1,687 virtual visits and had 27 patients enrolled in the remote patient monitoring program in 2023.

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?Dufferin County has an amazing group of paramedics! Words can't express enough how helpful, thoughtful, skilled, knowledgeable, and real these people are. My husband and I quickly acquired an awesome friendship with them during their care, and I know that friendship has carried on since a year ago. I appreciate and thank them all so much from my heart,? said Shelley and her husband, who have received service from the community paramedicine program.

Anyone interested in the Community Paramedic Program can connect with the program directly by phone at 1-844-791-1182 or by email at communityparamedic@dufferincounty.ca, and complete a referral form.

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