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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** April 29, 2026  
**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** Neil Anderson, Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief  
**Report Number:** ITS26-008  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** New Medical Dispatching System

**Objective:** To update City Council on the implementation of the Medical Priority Dispatching System and the impact it will have on Stratford Fire Department medical responses.

**Background:** Perth County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) currently respond to medical emergencies on what is referred to as a Dispatch Priority Code. A Code 4 means they respond with lights and sirens while a Code 3 is considered as urgent but not life-threatening. Regardless of the emergency, under this system, once an ambulance is assigned to an incident it cannot be reassigned to a different incident of higher urgency. The Stratford Fire Department currently has a Tiered Response Agreement in which we respond to all Tiered level 4 responses which consists of most medical responses.

In October 2026, Perth County EMS will begin being dispatched through a new system called the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS), the service provided by London Central Ambulance Communication Centre (CACC). This system will change how ambulances, and subsequently fire departments, are assigned (tiered) to emergency responses through an extensive line of questioning by the CACC Dispatchers. Instead of a number or Code, the response types will now be assigned colours as a sort of triage system which will resemble the following:

Purple – Emergent and immediately life-threatening  
Red – Emergent and potentially life-threatening  
Orange – Urgent and potentially serious, immediate threat to life unlikely  
Yellow – Not urgent, not serious, immediate threat to life very unlikely  
Green – Not urgent, not serious, immediate threat to life very unlikely, may be deferred without detrimental impact to patient outcome.

**Analysis:** The primary benefit of this MPDS system is that it will permit ambulances to be reassigned to higher priority responses, based upon availability. However, it will also result in potentially higher wait times for clients with lower acuity complaints.

Purple and Red incidents will be dispatched immediately using the closest ambulance, but lower acuity responses will be assigned maximum priority wait times if an ambulance is not available. This means that Orange incidents will be assigned a priority wait time of a maximum of 60 minutes; Yellow will be assigned 120 minutes, and Green will be assigned 240 minutes. Once a colour gets to the maximum wait time, it will then be assigned as the priority for the next available ambulance.

This change in dispatching will mean that the existing Tiered Response Agreement between the Stratford Fire Department and Perth County EMS will no longer be current and will have to be revisited to reflect the MPDS process and redefine the medical incidents that the fire department responds to.

London CACC is one of the last in the province to switch to the MPDS and the Stratford Fire Department has been following the progress of fire departments that have already switched. The recommended practice of these fire departments is to respond to Purple and Red emergencies and some lower acuity medical emergencies that hold a higher priority for the fire department (which will be decided upon by the fire department). The reason for this is that if we were to continue with our current response level it could result in the fire department being committed to a medical event of low acuity (Yellow or Green) for quite possibly hours while waiting for an ambulance that continues to be reassigned to higher priorities. This would equally mean the fire department couldn't respond to the higher priority emergencies once they've already made patient contact and are committed to that location because the fire department does not perform patient transfers. With the fire department responding to the Purple and Red emergencies, it means that the ambulance will also be responding to them.

It is notable that with the MPDS the call volume of medical responses by participating fire departments have dropped considerably to almost half the amount, on average. The reason for this is that they are no longer responding to the low acuity medical incidents as they can't risk being committed to a patient for potentially hours while awaiting an ambulance. Some examples of low acuity medical calls are a headache, feeling generally unwell, and a minor nosebleed.

Once developed in collaboration with Perth County EMS, a new Tiered Response Agreement will be presented for consideration by City Council.

### **Financial Implications:**

#### **Link to asset management plan and strategy:**

This will improve the level of service to clients who are having life-threatening medical situations that will receive both fire and ambulance services almost immediately,

permitting the client to be transferred to hospital care much quicker than the existing system.

**Not applicable:**

There are no financial implications to be reported as a result of this report.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

**Work Together For Greater Impact**

This report aligns with this priority as the fire department and Perth County EMS will draft a tiered response agreement that reflects the new level of service where the fire department will not have to await ambulance to perform a patient transfer.

**Intentionally Change to Support the Future**

The Stratford Fire Department will adopt their medical responses to the new MPDS system that will be implemented by London CACC and Perth County EMS.

**Alignment with One Planet Principles:**

**Not applicable:** This report does not impact the One Planet Principles as it simply deals with a change in level of service.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT Council support the change in the Stratford Fire Department medical responses to cover Purple, Red and selected other medical responses;**

**AND THAT staff be directed to negotiate a new Tiered Response Agreement between Stratford Fire Department and Perth County EMS.**

**Prepared by:** Neil Anderson, Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief  
**Recommended by:** André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer