

# 2019

**Pointe au Baril Islanders' Association**

T. Scott Sheard, Past EMS Committee Chair

## **PABIA EMS COMMITTEE**

Short summary of final recommendation for elimination of potential 4 hour or more wait time for the transportation of EMS personnel to off-shore locations in a critical medical emergency.

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# Managing Off-Shore Medical Risk

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## Introduction

Pointe au Baril Islanders' Association has been working towards enhancing medical emergency response while increasing community preparedness since the demise of PaBERT. We recognize and are grateful for the sustained effort of PaBERT volunteers who served our community for over 10 years.

PaBIA undertook to increase our individual ability to respond to medical and fire emergencies. Michael Evans, Medical Chair for PaBIA, has outlined emergency procedures for your review in past PaBIA Yearbook articles. PaBIA's EMS Committee has worked diligently to enhance our self-preparedness through measures including cottage emergency planning, access to discounted defibrillators, and focus on first aid.

Under the over-sight of three (3) PaBIA Presidents and two (2) long-term committees, we developed a final recommendation for the community to consider. Board presentations were made in 2017 and 2018 on this final committee recommendation.

## Background

The demise of PaBERT has reduced our ability to mitigate medical and fire risk in our off-shore community acutely and we, the Community, must own this reality. Generally, we did not appreciate how fortunate we were to have an EMS certified agency to transport medical personnel off-shore and to have trained fire-fighting volunteers in our midst. Pointe au Baril Station community worked tirelessly to train local volunteers, acquire equipment and adopt provincial protocols in a most professional and thorough manner. There are many heartfelt stories about how the PaBERT volunteers made a tangible difference in our lives, and we thank them immeasurably for their community service.

However, these small number of volunteers could not sustain the support to service residents, (permanent or summer), who number many times its base. Volunteers have careers and family demands that make extended emergency support unpractical and a burden on their lives.

## Our Community is Well-Supported

Unlike other Georgian Bay off-shore communities, the Pointe au Baril (PaB) area is very well served medically by West Parry Sound District Health services. Other areas in Georgian Bay do not have ambulance and nursing stations residing in their mainland village nor served by a hospital within a 40 minute drive. Despite the demise of PaBERT, Pointe au Baril is much better enabled with medical services than other parts of northern Georgian Bay.

EMS personnel are dependent on certified transportation agencies such as the OPP and Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) to respond to water-access-only medical emergencies. Both agencies identify that, under normal conditions, they can be in Pointe au Baril in 45 minutes from their respective bases (Parry Sound and Britt respectively). However, that is dependent on whether they are available or addressing other emergency and non-emergency situations.

Please consider how Pointe au Baril is well supported:

- ✓ Excellent West Parry Sound Health Centre within 40 minute drive;
- ✓ Well-run and staffed EMS service in West Parry Sound District;
- ✓ Ambulance station in PaB;
- ✓ Nursing station in PaB;
- ✓ 911 database includes our municipal address (property number on our dock);
- ✓ OPP and CCG are in 911 protocols in dispatch to PaB station to pick up paramedics.

### What is the Specific Problem?

Emergencies that require on-site EMS personnel could wait over 4 or more hours if certified transportation agencies (OPP/CCG) are handling other critical activities. Community comments and input to PaBIA's committee's identified that this is considered a very long time to watch a loved one in a dire medical situation or in agony.

There are instances where EMS personnel have agreed to use the services of our local marinas and contractor boats. However, there have been a number of instances throughout Georgian Bay where paramedics have refused to utilize transportation other than OPP or CCG. EMS personnel will not normally enter our personal boats.

Marine ambulance transportation services do not exist in Ontario to the best of our knowledge and research.

Many questions from our community were raised with PaBIA's EMS Committee. Some noteworthy examples are the following:

#### Transport Patient to the Station?

While this is an option and a viable one, we must have enough first aid knowledge to prevent inadvertently exacerbating the medical emergency by moving a patient or risking their health in one's own transportation to mainland. When you call 911, they will not instruct nor guide you to move a patient as per their protocols. Cottagers must have first aid training to deal with the decisions.

#### What about Orange Air Service?

In discussions with EMS, we cannot count on the services of air transportation as a predictable capability. There are difficult examples of the limited air services dispatched to

an off-shore site only to have the helicopter be re-routed to another emergency within 5 minutes of landing at the original call. Triage decisions dictate how these services are dispatched.

### Solutions

Many concerned people in the community have offered constructive ideas on dealing with medical emergencies. They include:

- PaBIA operate a transportation service;
- Acquire a large pontoon boat with paramedic equipment on stand-by;
- Employ off-duty paramedics and station at the Ojibway Club;
- Municipality should establish and run it.

We all truly appreciate an engaged community and its ideas on how to solve the potential delay of transportation for the paramedics. PaBIA's EMS Committee has considered all of these ideas and identified challenges associated to them and those that simply do not work within the 911 system. The following is an outline for each suggestion.

### PaBIA Transportation Service

Our ratepayer organization is a collection of volunteers and not equipped nor experienced in running operations, never mind a 24/7 transportation service. The liabilities alone make this impractical.

### Purchase Boats/Equipment

The issue again becomes who will man the equipment and be on-call 24/7. For paramedics to be utilized, it would have to be certified by WPS EMS organization to standards equivalent to OPP/CCG.

### Employ & Station Off-Duty Paramedics

West Parry Sound EMS employs highly trained personnel and is staffed appropriately for our region. The issue is not a shortage of paramedics; but rather the transportation of them to our off-shore locations. We must not and cannot interfere with provincially mandated 911 system protocols

### Municipality Should Provide It

911/Ambulance services are the responsibility of the Province. To our knowledge, the Province of Ontario has not established marine ambulance services anywhere and do not plan to do so. The Township cannot provide these services by mandate or is it capable of doing so.

### Our Recommended Solution

We recognize that Pointe au Baril has effective 911 services but also that it requires additional marine transportation resources in addition to the OPP and CCG. In previous presentations to PaBIA's Board, we established a position for PaBIA where it advocates the creation of a community committee or foundation that could raise funds to establish a certified transportation agency. Alternatively, it advocated to have the Township levy our neighbourhood to pay for the service.

The work of the two EMS committees have developed this creative solution to add another formalized transportation agency as a certified option for 911 personnel, overcome lack of volunteer resources in our community, and create employment in PaB. Most importantly, it does not insert an extra step or service into the strictly managed protocols of EMS 911. Rather it could be integrated into 911 lists of certified transportation agencies in its decision matrix for a medical emergency.

PaBIA would be the catalyst to create a community committee, external to PaBIA, that focuses solely on the creation of a community funded and certified 911 transportation agency in Pointe au Baril. This committee or foundation would have a singular focus and formulate a plan to move forward. It would include but not limited to the following:

- establish a direct relationship with 911 EMS and other levels of government,
- develop a community narrative for communication purposes,
- create a business case for a business to consider operating a 24/7 service,
- Create tender for services sought, etc.

The Township of Archipelago could be utilized to apply a levy by neighbourhood to pay for the service.

### Benefits

The creation of a certified transportation agency local to Pointe au Baril will provide the following:

- ✓ Potentially eliminates the possibility of a 4 or more hour wait;
- ✓ Work within provincially mandated 911 response protocols;
- ✓ Creates employment in PaB that addresses volunteer issues;
- ✓ PaBIA is solely the catalyst to enlist interested community members in the establishment of a community committee or foundation;
- ✓ PaBIA is not involved in the effort to establish this service nor operate it.

### Conclusions|Next Steps

#### Solicit Input Gain Concurrence

It is important to gauge our Community's understanding of the potential gap in response time and its potential impact on our families however unlikely it may appear. It is important to note that this would be a unique solution as there are no publicly funded 911 certified, marine transportation service in Ontario beyond OPP and the CCG. This means our community would pay for this service above and beyond our municipal and provincial taxes.

#### Open Letter to Community

PaBIA must address the survey results on EMS services on the Bay and can do this with an 'Open Letter to the Community' outlining the PaBIA's position and the work done to date. We recommend that it come from the Board and be utilized to solicit volunteers to undertake the hard work of creating a community committee or foundation.

#### PaBIA Role is 'Catalyst'

Should our community choose to move forward, PaBIA would solicit volunteers to form a committee outside of our rate payer association to undertake the formal responsibility for the solution, engage key stakeholders and begin the hard work of detailed planning. PaBIA can certainly be a resource to the committee but its Board and volunteers would have no formal responsibility or involvement that derives risk to the Association.

It is for the Board to develop a motion to either adopt this approach or decide it is not the path forward for PaBIA. Member Safety Portfolio would continue to work on member self-preparedness for fire and medical in either scenario.