

The Pulse

by SCoP

Saskatchewan College of Paramedics newsletter

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Expanding scope leads to
plans for mandatory
Professional Liability
Insurance

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Strength

by Janelle Wilson, Strasbourg EMS

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Expanding scope leads to plans for mandatory Professional Liability Insurance

By Virginia Wilkinson

Paramedicine has seen significant evolution over the past number of years, particularly since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. The growth of the profession is positive for paramedics because it means they are playing a larger, and growing, role in health service delivery. As the role played by paramedics expands, however, the need for professional liability insurance increases.

“Paramedics are being asked to be more and more responsible. Their scope is always expanding. We’re recognizing the need to have a layer of protection for our members, and ultimately for the public through this mechanism,” said Jen Williams, Director of Professional Practice and Research, Saskatchewan College of Paramedics.

Professional liability insurance provides both paramedics and patients with protection in situations where errors, or allegations of errors, are made. According to research done for the Professional Paramedic Association of Ottawa, since 2005, there have been more than 200 legal cases launched against paramedics, and 50% of these cases ended up in court where paramedics were required to defend themselves.¹

“It’s about doing your due diligence to protect your interests as well as those of the public. People make mistakes and I would hate to see individuals lose their financial well-being over a mistake, so it protects both,” said Jacquie Messer-Lepage, Executive Director, Saskatchewan College of Paramedics.

The role of insurance in health professions

As with most health professions across the country which recognize the importance of insurance for health practitioners, paramedic associations in all provinces except

Saskatchewan and one other, now require paramedics to carry professional liability insurance to be licensed. In 2018, the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics began looking at introducing this requirement.

“Most regulated health professions require mandatory liability insurance, so we are really late comers to the party,” said Messer-Lepage.

The registration system used by SCoP in 2018 posed challenges to

“In Saskatchewan all of our emergency medical responders and paramedics are independent practitioners. That means if anything were to happen, they are responsible ultimately. They don’t have anybody else to fall back on,” said Williams.

She points out that although some practitioners have some coverage through their employers, even that coverage is often limited.

“There are different types of liability insurance programs, and the

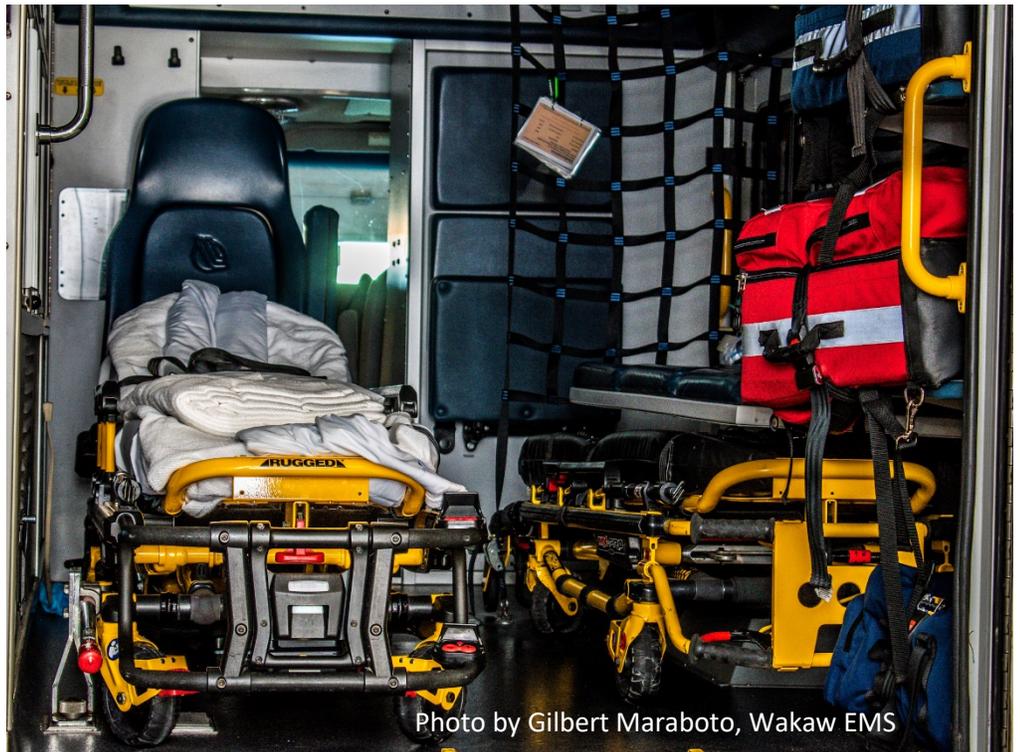


Photo by Gilbert Maraboto, Wakaw EMS

introducing the requirement, but the College has been working towards that implementation since then.

“We weren’t quite at a point where we knew how we were going to manage it. Now we are at a point where we have a registration system that has different capabilities, so our ability to capture that information is much better now,” she explained.

For SCoP members, the College’s plan to introduce mandatory professional liability insurance is good news.

employer’s insurance may not cover them fully. Insurance is also necessary not only while they are at work, but also for when they volunteer for example.” She encourages all members who believe they are covered through their employer’s insurance to review that insurance to be sure it covers all their potential needs.

“Because the financial risk to you is potentially so high if you have an incident. It’s just like any other insurance. You get insurance on your home. Many people will never

need to make a claim, but no one wants to have a house that isn't insured," she said.

Protection of the public

Messer-Lepage and Williams say the insurance not only plays a critical role in protecting members, but it's also important in protecting the public.

"We really do need to make sure are members are insured in the interest of public protection. When paramedics start working independently doing COVID testing, or vaccinations or whatever else they happen to be doing for non-health related organizations, we really need to make sure that there is some protection there for those members and for the public," said Messer-Lepage.

"It's another piece of that accountability and responsibility – being a profession requires that. I think the public just expects, or probably even assumes, that paramedics already have this protection in place," agreed Williams.

There are a range of organizations offering professional liability insurance, including the Paramedic Association of Canada's Professional Liability Insurance Program. Insurance policies differ slightly but can cover criminal defense reimbursement, coroner's inquest appearances, breach of confidentiality, loss of income, and disciplinary legal expenses, among others.²

"There have been several members that have gone through the discipline process over the years,

and in some situations, they've had to pay the costs or fines associated with the process. That can definitely cause a financial burden," said Williams.

A review of fees for professional liability insurance offered through a number of agencies suggest fees are relatively low in cost. In most cases the fees are less than \$100 per year. The fees for the program offered through the Paramedic Association of Canada is \$69 annually.

Implementing mandatory insurance for members

Messer-Lepage said carrying professional liability insurance will become a mandatory part of licensing for all members, but she says the College is still working on what the insurance requirement process will look like. She suggests members will likely be able to choose their own insurance provider, rather than purchasing insurance through the College.

"There are already good products out there that are available to our members through the Paramedics Association of Canada, or through

other agencies, so I don't think we want to start purchasing insurance on behalf of our members. Many of our members may already have that insurance, so I don't think we want to limit them," she said.

The requirement to carry professional liability insurance isn't expected to come into effect until the 2023 renewal period. The proposed regulatory change will first need to go the SCoP's Legislation and Bylaws Committee, Council, SCoP's Annual General Meeting, and the Minister for final approval.

"We want to give members enough time to get their affairs in order, so we're not going to blindsides anybody, we'll give them plenty of notice," said Messer-Lepage.

¹Legal Protection for Paramedics, Professional Paramedic Association of Ottawa

²Paramedic Association of Canada Professional Liability Insurance Program



Photo by Eric Jelinski, STARS

Coping in COVID times

By now most of us are tired of hearing that we are living in “unprecedented times”. We are just about to pass the 24-month mark of when COVID-19 crept into our collective conscience and became our collective nightmare. These times are no longer unprecedented. They are the new reality that we all must cope with.

With that reality comes impacts on the physical and mental health of all Canadians. These impacts are significant and unfortunately appear to be largely negative, although undoubtedly there will be the occasional individual who is able to see a “silver lining” in all of this.

For our members who are called to provide professional services to increasingly complex-needs and distressed members of the public, with limited resources and increasing uncertainty, the impacts can be significant.

Emergency Medical Responders (EMR) and Paramedics may have to accept conditions on the job that challenge their professional values and ethics. For those working on the frontline the fear of getting COVID-19 and potentially bringing it home to loved ones, feeling unsupported, and feelings of guilt, helplessness, anger, and frustration among many other negative emotions, are understandable and reasonable reactions to the uncertainty of the moment; the uncertainty created by the pandemic.

Some of the public served may seem less than grateful for the help they receive. They may be combative, insulting, or less willing to share information and may perceive the EMR or paramedic as intrusive.

Coworkers under stress may also be having difficulty coping, and this may strain work relationships, and make the work itself more challenging. The workplace may feel more pressurized, less supportive, more inflexible and demanding.



Photo by Angela Sereda, Medavie Health Services West – Moose Jaw

Being human, and when confronted with situations and individuals such as these, the temptation may be to react and strike out with anger and upset. It goes without saying that such behaviour is incongruent with professional paramedical training and ethics and would not be acceptable.

That is not at all to suggest that one must simply “accept” and stay silent. Feeling upset by conflict and stressful situations is normal. Doing nothing about these would be unsatisfactory and could potentially be damaging to one’s health, and in particular one’s mental health.

Situations such as these call on our members to use their professional skills to defuse conflict, to set clear boundaries, to give grace, and to perform as competent members of the profession. Injury whether it be moral, emotional, or physical should not be an accepted part of the job.

The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics understands that the work of our members is incredibly difficult and demanding, and that the pandemic has only magnified this.

If you are having difficulty coping, support and help are available. Seeking help is not a sign of

incompetence or weakness. It takes strength to seek help and doing so is congruent with the ethics and expectations of the profession.

If you are having difficulties coping you are encouraged to:

- seek assistance through your employee benefit plan or community based mental health services (other potential resources can be found at <https://collegeofparamedics.sk.ca/resources/member-wellness>),
- to appropriately voice your concerns with your employer/manager,
- to seek out peer-support, and
- to consult with the College about ethical and practice concerns.

Healthy professionals are key to the provision of competent services. Your contributions are invaluable to the health and wellbeing of the people of Saskatchewan, and it is important that you value your health as much as you do that of the public you serve.

References are listed on next page

References:

- Canadian Medical Association. (Sept. 9, 2021). *Moral Injury: What it is and how to respond to it*. Retrieved January 7, 2022, from <https://www.cma.ca/physician-wellness-hub/content/moral-injury>
- Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health and the Canadian Centre of Excellence – PTSD (2020). *Moral Stress Amongst Healthcare Workers During COVID-19: A Guide to Moral Injury*.
- V. Williamson, D. Murphy et al. (June 1, 2021). *Moral injury: the effect on mental health and implications for treatment*. The Lancet Psychiatry, Vol.8 (6), pp. 453-455.

SCoP Council Election

The 2022 Council Election is on and ends soon!

Ballots have already been emailed to you. Please contact SCoP if you have not received your ballot or the reminder emails.

3 members have put their names forward to run for the 2 Member-at-Large position on Council: **Donna Dohms, Mike Meyer, and Michael Slater.**

One member has been acclaimed as Vice President.

All votes are confidential and counted one time. Winning candidates will be announced at the AGM on Wednesday, May 4.

The biographies of the candidates for election are listed in alphabetical order.

3 candidates for 2 Member-at-Large positions:

Donna Dohms



Donna Dohms is an Intermediate Care Paramedic for Saskatchewan Health Authority EMS serving Sunrise and Kelsey trail facilities. She has been employed full time since 1989 where she has served in various communities including Moosomin, Humboldt, Preeceville and Nipawin. Her experience is on car, CEC facility, supervisory and as an EMS Education Coordinator for 14 years.

She began as an EMR in 1989, achieving her EMT/PCP in 1991 at SIAST. Shortly after, she achieved her EMT-A/ICP in 1997 and still continues to advance her education. She is also a former instructor for St. John's Ambulance, HSF, and Red Cross for 23 years.

Donna served on the SCoP education committee from its inception in 2010 to 2013 where she was active on the audit committee, the protocol committee and served on the Paramedic Practice Committee with the College of Physicians and Surgeons. She enjoyed serving her peers in this capacity and found it very rewarding to see our profession advance. In 2011, she was humbly honored with the Governor Generals Exemplary Services award in EMS.

Donna has recently moved back to Melville with her family to get back to their roots. She hopes to become involved again in various volunteer activities and interests. SCoP has always been one of those interests through which she hopes to serve her peers again.

Donna has accepted nomination to run for Council. She hopes her broad experience base will supplement her ability to collaborate with the team members to make sound decisions for our future.

She states "Many hospital hallway conversations begin with 'What if we could'. I would like to help advance them to become 'We can!'"

Mike Meyer



Mike Meyer is being nominated for a second term as a Member at Large on Council for the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics. Mike has a diverse background in public safety, leadership, and research. He resides in Alameda, Saskatchewan after moving from the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area. Mike is the Corporate Safety Manager for 14 Ceres Global Ag. Corp. facilities in North America (a grain transloading company). He is also a licensed Emergency Medical Responder and volunteers his time responding with EMS in Southeast Saskatchewan.

Mike received his PhD. in Administration and Leadership Studies for the Non-Profit and Public Sectors in 2012. Prior to moving to Saskatchewan, he was a professor at California University of Pennsylvania and the Community College of Alleghany County where he taught in Health Sciences, Industrial Wellness, and Public Safety disciplines. He has over 25 years of experience in public safety as a firefighter and EMT where he was responsible for safety programming for on-scene operations as well as company pre-planning and daily safety operations.

As a professor, Mike had the responsibility of being the program director in Health Sciences; responsibilities included reporting to the college Dean and President, compiling outcomes to measure the effectiveness of the program, and revising areas of the program that lacked value.

Mike has over 10 years of experience with research related to health, wellness, and policy development. Mike has held multiple board and committee positions where he emphasizes the need to create standards based on best practices and empirical evidence as opposed to anecdotal experience. Further, Mike believes that any governing body should consider the input from all stakeholders impacted by the policy and procedure.

Mike values the importance of governing bodies. His role is to support executive decisions and provide accountability of the College to protect the health and safety of the public. He has a rich background in understanding clinical scope of practice responsibilities and how these responsibilities reflect on the College. Protecting the integrity of the College and its stakeholders is his intent for seeking a second term.

Michael Slater



My name is Michael Slater. I have been in EMS for 29 years and for 27 of those years have worked for Medavie Health Services West-Moose Jaw as an Advanced Care Paramedic.

I graduated from Saskatchewan Polytechnic as a Primary Care Paramedic and then in 1999 as an Advanced Care Paramedic.

I currently am an instructor in ITLS, 1st Aid/CPR, 1st Responder, Road to Mental Readiness and Group Crisis Intervention. I am also employed as a casual instructor at Saskatchewan Polytechnic since 2008.

I am very committed to Mental Health support and awareness for the Paramedic Profession. I have certification in both basic and Advanced Group Crisis Intervention and Assisting Individuals in Crisis. I am currently an active member of the Provincial Crisis Intervention team and have provided Critical Incident Stress debriefing throughout the province. As well as recently becoming a committee member on the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics Member Wellness Committee.

I am married with 3 grown children and a grandson as of January 2021. About 5 years ago I made a major lifestyle change losing over 100lbs and becoming very passionate about physical fitness. Completing the Regina Police Half Marathon, Rocky Mountain Super Spartan Challenge, 3rd place in the Novice division of the Paramedic Fitness challenge at the EMS expo in Winnipeg.

I continue to be passionate about the Paramedic Profession and look forward to new and exciting challenges in both Paramedicine and fitness.

Voting closes April 27 @ noon

AGM Registration is open!

Our Annual General Meeting will be held online via Zoom Webinar on Wednesday, May 4 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

The theme this year is Do Great Things!

Along with College updates and business, a Q&A will be included as well as sessions on building rapport with patients and nurturing your power.

Video and microphone capabilities are not needed for participants. Questions will be asked by typing them into the Q&A area and voting will occur by poll.

Registration is required to attend. 5 CME credits will be awarded to those who attend.

[Register for the AGM here >](#)

If you are viewing this newsletter as a printed copy, please visit our website for a clickable link.



VAPOC user testing. Photo by Rashed Al-Mamun, SCoP

Two resolutions will be presented for voting at the SCoP AGM on Wednesday, May 4, 2022. A third resolution is for information only.

2022 AGM Administrative Bylaw Resolution 1

TITLE of RESOLUTION: Generic Licence Level descriptions (Housekeeping)

WHEREAS: Section 15 of the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics Administrative Bylaws describes the Election of Council; and

WHEREAS: Section 15.1.4 describes eligible members using specific nomenclature; and

WHEREAS: The nomenclature used in Section 15 is outdated and limiting;

BE IT RESOLVED: That Section 15 of the Administrative Bylaws be amended to reflect a generic description of eligible members as follows:

15.1.4 three members-at-large nominated from the members registered **with the College at any licence level.**

Resolution submitted by: The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics

2022 AGM Administrative Bylaw Resolution 2

TITLE of RESOLUTION: Initial Application Fee

WHEREAS: The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics established a \$50 initial application fee in 2008; and

WHEREAS: Costs associated with evaluation of applications have increased since 2008;

BE IT RESOLVED: That the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics adjust the initial application fee to \$100.

Resolution submitted by: The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics

2022 AGM Proposed Administrative Bylaw Resolution 3

TITLE of RESOLUTION: Clarification of intent regarding resolution vote (Housekeeping)

WHEREAS: Section 21.6 of the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics Administrative Bylaws describes the process for submission of resolutions at the Annual Meeting; and

WHEREAS: Sub-section 21.6.2 requires that all resolutions are reviewed by the legislation and bylaws committee prior to being proposed at the annual meeting.

BE IT RESOLVED: That Section 21.6 be amended as follows:
21.6 A resolution to amend bylaws may be proposed by a member in good standing to the annual meeting **for consideration and vote at the next annual meeting or at a special meeting called by Council.**"

Resolution submitted by: The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics

Professional Conduct Committee update

The College is responsible for the protection of the public, and management of this responsibility is one of the most important roles that the College has.

It is our job to assure the public of the knowledge, skill, proficiency, and competency of members in the

practice of emergency medical services.

The professional conduct committee has investigated 7 complaints in 2022.

Of these, 4 relate to professional incompetence, and 3 relate to professional misconduct.

CME Credits update

The Education Committee has approved a mandatory 5 credit course focused on documentation for all

members effective with the 2023 renewal. This education is to be completed during 2022 and will count towards the total 20 CME credits required for renewal. All members will be required to complete this training, regardless if they recently completed continuing education or other training on documentation.

There will be no charge for this training.

The development of the course is underway. Once the module is completed the link will be posted to the SCoP website.

2023 Renewal requirements are online at

<https://collegeofparamedics.sk.ca/licensing/renewal/>

What is a Restricted licence?

A “Restricted Licence” is a Practicing licence with a Restriction added.

There are several types of Restricted licences in Saskatchewan, all with different effects on the practitioner and their scope.

1. New member who is a new graduate waiting to pass licensing exam

A practitioner with this type of restriction may never work alone. Can only work under direct supervision.

Direct supervision is defined as no more than an arms length away at all times while providing patient care.

No other jurisdiction in Canada offers this type of licence to new practitioners who have not yet passed their licensing exam.

2. New member who is licensed in another province can license in Saskatchewan through Labour Mobility and may have educational deficiencies

A practitioner with this type of restriction is only not allowed to perform the specific restricted skills until additional gap training is complete and restriction removed.

Restricted skill for EMRs from BC and Newfoundland & Labrador is *Administer epi-pen*.

Restricted skills for PCPs from most provinces are *Blood Products* and *Urinary Catheterization*; PCPs from NB are only restricted from *Blood Products*

Restricted skills for ACPs from BC are *Blood Products* and *Urinary Catheterization*. ACPs from Ontario are restricted from *Blood Products*.

3. Current members taking a Restriction at Renewal

Members can renew as Restricted if they don't have current certificates, skills, or CME during Licence Renewal

This type of restriction **does not** affect how you work. Allows for 6 months to fulfill renewal requirements.

4. Student Restricted Licence: Current members who have recently completed a paramedic program at a level higher than their current licence level are eligible for a student restricted licence

This type of practitioner is unrestricted at the lower licence level.

When working at the higher licence level, they are subject to the conditions laid out in option 1 until they have passed their licensing exam.

Anyone can go to the Verify a Member page of the College website to view which type of restriction is on any individual member.

Contact the College if you have any questions!

Photo by Gilbert Maraboto, Wakaw EMS

