

MARKET SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

**Report of the Market Supplement Review
Committee**

**Paramedic
(Annual Review)**

Final Report

October 15, 2003

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Market Supplement Program is to ensure that Saskatchewan health care employers can attract and retain the employees required to provide appropriate health care services to the people of Saskatchewan.

This program is designed to address specific skill shortages by use of a temporary market supplement to attract and/or retain qualified employees. The program is designed to ensure that temporary market supplements respond to valid labour market criteria to address recruitment/retention pressures.

OVERVIEW

The Market Supplement Review Committee reviewed documentation submitted in the annual review process regarding the market supplement for Paramedics. The initial market supplement report was released by the Market Supplement Review Committee August 6, 2002 and implemented on October 16, 2002. This latest report is to be considered as part of the on-going review of the market supplement process for this classification as described in the HSAS Letters of Understanding. This is the first such annual review for the Paramedic classification.

There are three Health Regions that employ Paramedics in Saskatchewan. Paramedics are members of Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS).

Role of a Paramedic:

Paramedics provide intervention services to those clients requiring Emergency Medical Services (EMS). These interventions have been demonstrated to be life saving and significantly impact patient comfort and outcome. Paramedics are able to provide the following:

- *Pain control through the administration of narcotics.*
- *Stabilization of severe respiratory distress.*
- *Diuresis of Congestive Heart Failure patients*
- *Full ACLS resuscitation equivalent to that performed in the Emergency Department.*
- *Twelve lead ECG interpretation*
- *Cardiac pacing*

A number of Health Regions in Saskatchewan have private ambulance services. This report does not include information from those employers.

Qualifications:

There are multiple levels of EMS practitioners in Saskatchewan. To apply to the Paramedic program, these practitioners must have two years experience as an EMT. The Paramedic training program consists of thirteen weeks of training.

The most comprehensive EMS practitioner in Saskatchewan is the Paramedic.

Information regarding budgeted positions and vacancies is provided in the following table:

Table 1 – Paramedics – Budgeted and vacant positions

Health Regions	Number of Budgeted Positions (As of August, 2003)		Number of Vacant Budgeted Positions (As of August, 2003)		% Vacancy	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Prairie North	1	-	-	-	-	-
Regina Qu'Appelle	35	-	11	-	31.4%	-
Sun Country	1	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	37	0	11	0	29.7%	0%

Table 2 – Paramedics – Budgeted and vacant position comparisons (2002/2003)

Paramedic Classification	Number of Budgeted Positions		Number of Vacant Budgeted Positions		% Vacancy	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
2002 TOTALS: (All Regions)	34	0	6	0	17.6%	0%
COMPARISON (2002 vs. 2003)	+3	-	+5	-	+12.1%	-

Note: The data in Table 1 and Table 2 may be incomplete as not all the same employers may have reported for both years.

ANALYSIS

The MSRC discussed the Labour Market Criteria as guided by the Market Supplement Program framework.

SERVICE DELIVERY IMPACTS: *(Employers were asked to provide information that addresses current service delivery impacts resulting from staff shortages, potential staff short term service delivery impacts, potential long term service delivery impacts and options for alternative service delivery models).*

One Region (Regina Qu'Appelle) reported that they are currently experiencing service delivery issues. This Region has converted Advanced Life Support ambulances to Basic Life Support because of staff shortages and has spent significant dollars on overtime (\$312,000 over the past year due to the reorganization of the EMS department). Call volumes have increased by 2% over the past year.

The other two Regions reported that they are not experiencing service delivery issues at present.

VACANCY RATE ANALYSIS: *(Employers were requested to provide information about the frequency and timing of vacancy occurrences {i.e., seasonal vacancies; do the vacancies always follow an event; etc.} and to identify trends that may affect recruitment/retention efforts).*

Over the past several years, staff shortages have existed because of the inability to recruit Paramedics due to wages. With the collective agreement settlements of 2002, wages for

Paramedics have become more competitive and have increased the employer's ability to more successfully recruit and retain.

The region now has more vacant positions than one year ago. However, this is at least partially due to the efforts of the region to reorganize their department. A reorganization of the management team was necessary to adapt to the increased responsibilities experienced by the administration following the formation of RQHR. This created a need for four new classifications (team leader) that had to be filled as well as the back filling of the four paramedic positions that were vacated as a result of that move.

TURNOVER RATES: *(Employers were asked to provide local analysis of reasons for leaving and trends that may be emerging. They were also asked to provide annual turnover loss of employees to other competitor employers} ratio to the existing staff complement {budgeted positions} in the given occupation.)*

Two of the three Regions reported no turnover issues.

The other Region reported ongoing terminations over the past few years as follows:

2002 – 7 terminations

2001 – 4 terminations

Terminations reported above include reasons such as retirements, spousal transfer, wage rates and others. Historical turnover data is incomplete and approximate.

RECRUITMENT ISSUE ANALYSIS: *(Employers were asked to provide information such as length of recruitment times, training investments, licensing issues, supply and demand issues, etc., as well as information that would identify trends that may affect recruitment and/or retention efforts).*

One Region has initiated standard recruitment practices such as advertising, and attending career fairs. In addition, it has had to undertake a number of other initiatives over several years in their attempt to recruit and retain Paramedics. These initiatives include: offering higher initial rates of pay, increase the number of FTE's to address workload pressures, signing bonuses i.e. \$2,000 to \$3,000, training allowances, and an interest free loan to region EMT's who attend the Paramedic program which is paid back over two and a half years. The region is also involved as a practicum site for EMT and Paramedics in an attempt to recruit new graduates.

One Region has not undertaken any recruitment or retention initiatives.

SALARY MARKET CONDITIONS: *(Employers were asked to identify situations where their salary levels are lower than other employers that they would expect to recruit employees from or other employers that recruit their employees. This may be local, provincial, regional, national or international depending on the occupation group and traditional recruitment relationships. Cost of living considerations may or may not be appropriate to factor into market salary comparisons).*

Prior to October 16, 2002, the wage rate (top Step) for a Paramedic was \$21.117/hour and increased effective October 16, 2002 to \$26.050 (including market supplement). This represents a \$4.933/hour (or 23.36%) increase.

A private competitor in Saskatchewan pays \$27.05/hr for this classification. In Alberta, bargaining for this classification is still in progress at the time of this report.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

Considering the labour market criteria under the provincial framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee makes the following conclusions:

- Two of the three Regions employing Paramedics report no service delivery issues.
- Due to non-wage related circumstances, the other region has more vacancies now than what was indicated in the previous report primarily due to organizational restructuring.
- This is the first year that this region has experienced a decrease in attrition and an increased ability to attract and hire more competent individuals. The rebuilding process is a slow one and the region is still trying to recruit Paramedics to fill vacancies created by years of high turnover and some inappropriate hires.

Having reviewed the employer information and considering the labour market criteria defined by the market supplement framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee recommends:

- To maintain the current market supplement for the Paramedic classification.

APPENDIX A

Market Supplement Consideration Request – Paramedics

Employer Respondent

- 1. Prairie North**
- 2. Regina Qu'Appelle**
- 3. Sun Country**