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## BACKGROUNDER

### Paramedic Association of Canada Mental Health Survey

#### Introduction

The Paramedic Association of Canada (PAC), professional organization of paramedicine practitioners across the country, conducted a wide-reaching survey of its members to improve understanding of mental health concerns and treatment among paramedics. The following document outlines the key findings of the survey.

#### Findings

The overall theme to emerge from the survey is that paramedics face a significant risk of sustaining traumas requiring psychological support while at work, and that there is a high level of demand for a wide range of support among paramedics.

When asked the question, “For what types of issues do you believe that paramedics and dispatchers need psychological support?” a selection of responses included:

- 96.2% said that support is needed for “Critical Incidents”, of which 62.1% felt it is strongly needed
- 96.8% said support is needed for “Cumulative impact (multiple traumatic calls over career)”, and of those 59.6% said it is strongly needed
- 97.1% said support is needed for “Depression / depletion”, with 63.8% saying it is strongly needed

These very high percentages indicate it is not only one-off traumatic experiences that are the biggest issue for paramedics, but the long-term, ongoing effects of repeated exposure.

Perhaps the most shocking findings came in response to questions around paramedics considering suicide:

- 29.9% of paramedics in BC indicated that they had personally considered suicide
- 65.5% said they knew of another paramedic who had at some time contemplated suicide
- 69.8% indicated that they had been concerned that another paramedic may be at risk for suicide

These figures underline the seriousness of the mental health challenges faced, and the importance of providing adequate psychological support for paramedics.

The survey also asked what type of psychological support paramedics need access to, and the statistic that stands out is that 99.1% of respondents said that “Access to counselling provided by mental health professionals who understand Paramedicine” is needed, with 81.1% saying it is strongly needed.

## **Respondents**

Across Canada, a total of 6,136 paramedics took part in the survey and, of those, 639 were based in British Columbia. The percentages quoted below all refer to the figures for paramedics in BC.

These were experienced paramedics, with over half of the BC-based respondents having completed more than 10 years' service. The majority – close to 90% in BC – were union members.

A majority of the BC paramedics worked in urban areas (66.5%), with 54.0% reporting that their paramedic service responded to more than 100,000 calls annually.

## **Methodology**

The PAC invited its members to take part in an online survey on mental health issues, including the types of issues for which they and other paramedics needed psychological support, the types of psychological services that they required, and whether they or their colleagues had considered suicide.

British Columbia survey results are available at [www.apbc.ca](http://www.apbc.ca).

