

FTR Views

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Settlements [Video]

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Everything a municipality always wanted to know about Emergency Medical Services (EMS) settlements... and more. Watch this video featuring [Mark Mason](#) for an overview of current information you, as an employer, should be aware of in reaching settlements with your EMS staff, including percentage increases in recent settlements, current trends, the differences across jurisdictions, hourly rates and comparators.

Transcript

Hi I'm Mark Mason. Today I'm going to be speaking to you about EMS settlements and trends across Ontario.

Over the past 17 years, paramedic wages in Ontario have increased by approximately 82 percent. That is a significant wage increase. That's the bad news.

But here's the good news. Over the past five years, those wage increases have been settling down into more normative, more municipal based, wage increases that you'll recognize from your other bargaining units. This is good – we're trending in the right direction. For years these wage increases went up up up and now they're settling into the 1.25 – 1.75 range that other municipal deals are coming in at.

Now some of you have had staff who have negotiated slightly longer term contracts and to buy those contracts the back-end numbers in 2018 and 2019 are slightly higher. Some of them are into the 2% range. We need to keep an eye on that because that trend if it continues will become very expensive going forward.

Longer-term deals are fine but we can't be negotiating them at a higher cost. So in general 1.25 to 1.75 is where staff should be directed to bring these deals in that.

Now what does that mean in terms of what your paramedics are making? Maybe you haven't seen the numbers on that. On average a PCP primary care paramedic in Ontario earns approximately \$83,000 a year. Your advanced care paramedics are making about \$92,000 a year. So that's not insignificant and these are going to be some of the highest-paid bargaining members that you have in your municipality.

Keep in mind with percentage increases, with shift premiums, with overtime many of these individuals are going to be breaking that \$100,000 barrier. In terms of the wage increases since 2010, that's where it seems to have peaked and it seems to have come back to the more normative increases.

Now what's going on region by region. There are differences – that's not going to surprise you. At least, I hope it doesn't surprise you. The GTA seems to lead the way, followed by southwestern Ontario, central Eastern Ontario and then Northern Ontario and I'm talking about your average hourly wage rates. Toronto is still waiting on interest arbitration so we'll see what happens with the City of Toronto over the next few years. But unlike most of the deals in the fire sector, EMS settlements are generally current and you're generally operating under a current collective agreement.

So let's talk about the success story of EMS bargaining. Your staff have done a very good job they need a pat on the back for that because your EMS contracts as a whole are quite reasonable especially in comparison to the other emergency services.

The first measure of success – they're not compared to the other emergency services. EMS are generally compared to your other municipal employees or more likely especially through arbitration your other geographical comparators – those neighboring municipalities and what are they paying that makes sense.

Your benefits generally have cost containment measures, they're generally capped benefits, they're reasonable, they're supported.

Your health care spending accounts in EMS you don't have them that's a huge advantage and you need to advise staff and they should be not negotiating these types of benefits.

Early retiree benefits are fine – those are the pre 65 employees retire slightly early. Generally they're limited in scope and duration and are generally fairly reasonable.

3, 6, 9 retention pay, existence pay, seniority pay – whatever you want to call it, whatever the fire sector called it – that doesn't exist in EMS and that needs to continue.

Hours of work restrictions – all of you are probably aware of the fact that in fire 24-hour shifts have become the norm. That's not the case in EMS and it can't be the case.

Now you have legislation that helps you but we need to once again continue to mean maintain employer flexibility.

In summary this is what you need to understand. The wage increases have come into a reasonable range in terms of the percentage increases and we need to continue that. Two to three-year term collective agreements are the norm. The lack of union provincial focus and political focus is significant and we need to continue to support that in the EMS sector in comparison to what's happened within the fire sector. And operational flexibility staff need to be directed to continue to maintain less cumbersome collective agreements especially again in comparison to the fire sector. So overall the EMS settlements are headed in the right direction, the trends are positive and staff need to be supported you.