

EMS Week
May 17 - 23, 2009

EMS Week is an opportunity for the public to walk a mile in the shoes of a paramedic. Just like firefighters and police officers, paramedics risk physical harm to save the lives of others. Take part in EMS activities in your community and share with others about what it is like to be an EMS worker. Check SEIU Local 1 Canada's website for more information at www.seiulocal1.org.

Windsor-Essex County EMS

"Even though SEIU had a better contract, Essex County paramedics chose the union they know and are familiar with," said Bill Hulme, SEIU's director of internal organizing. "60% of the voters were CUPE and they chose CUPE. 40% were SEIU and they chose SEIU" Those were the results of a representation vote for the paramedics in Windsor-Essex County, a region located in southwestern Ontario. SEIU thanks all the paramedics who worked hard for SEIU during the campaign.

Combating MRSA

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is becoming a big issue in health care facilities across Ontario. One way MRSA spreads is through stethoscopes. A recent study found 1 in 3 stethoscopes tested positive for MRSA. Paramedics can easily solve this problem by cleaning their stethoscopes regularly with alcohol wipes. The hospital can provide wipes in their emergency rooms.



Paramedics should have an award recognizing their selfless bravery.

Maria Van Bommel, MPP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and key sponsor of the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery.

Is NRA 60 back on the table?

Last year paramedics from across Ontario spoke to MPPs at Queen's Park about how strenuous a paramedic's job really is.

Afterwards, Ontario's MPPs voted unanimously to advance the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery, and support for NRA 60 began to receive new life among key decision makers in Queen's Park (see award story below).

"MPPs are really starting to realize that paramedicine can take a real toll on your health," said Dave Kennedy, a paramedic on SEIU's Provincial Paramedic Committee.

They got to see the hazardous, high stress conditions paramedics perform under every day. They were surprised to learn that paramedics are more likely to suffer

injuries, or go on long-term disability, than other workers.

SEIU Local 1 Canada, in cooperation with other unions, will talk again with the Ontario Government to give paramedic bargaining units the right to negotiate the option for paramedics to retire at the age of 60.

Retiring at the age of 60 is also a public safety issue. Sometimes older paramedics cannot keep up with the physical and emotional demands of the job. It is potentially dangerous to have paramedics over 60 lifting patients, as well as placing their own health at risk. Letting younger paramedics who have the strength to handle the high demands of the job will ensure accident and trauma victims get the treatment they need.

Paramedic award comes closer to reality

MPPs from all political stripes joined forces on Feb. 19, 2009 and took an important step to create the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery to honour EMS workers who have shown exceptional heroism on or off duty.

"The bill's 2nd reading sailed through the legislature," said Ched Zivic, a member of SEIU's

Paramedic Committee. "We expect this award will become law in a year or two."

This award is similar to awards given to fire fighters and police officers in Ontario.

This award was created to honour SEIU paramedic Paul Patterson from Essex-Kent County in southwestern Ontario, who lost his life while on duty in 2007.

Is a College of Paramedicine good news for EMS workers?

The Ontario Government is seriously thinking about regulating EMS workers through a College of Paramedicine.

Just like doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, dental hygienists, and other health care professionals, this regulatory body will create standards of practice that paramedics must live by or risk losing their job.

Does this body make life more difficult for paramedics? Or does it strengthen their profession? Here are two opposing views to the question.

5 POSITIVES

- Will protect the profile of EMS workers and upgrade their job class from vocational to professional, just like police and fire.
- Allegations of professional misconduct are reviewed by fellow paramedics, not government bureaucrats.
- In the United Kingdom, unions sit on their college regulatory board to ensure paramedics are heard.
- Helps provide malpractice insurance for paramedics against lawsuits.
- Paramedics obligations to patients will be clarified.

5 NEGATIVES

- Will have to deal with another level of regulation and bureaucracy.
- Will have to re-qualify for their job every several years.
- Will be required to pay hundreds of dollars in membership fees out of their own pocket.
- Unions in other regulatory colleges usually do not play a role in disciplinary hearings.
- Members can be sued, charged or investigated and will have to spend additional money on malpractice insurance.

First they download, now they upload!

There is serious discussion flowing through the corridors of Queen's Park debating whether the Ontario Government should upload EMS back to the provincial level.

This is a 180 degree turn from the previous Conservative government's decision to download EMS to the municipalities in the late 1990s.

The good news is a provincial takeover of EMS could improve funding and patient care.

EMS experienced many funding shortfalls when it was downloaded to the municipalities. Despite promises from the Ontario Government to fund 50% of EMS, the provincial government usually covered only 30% of the cost.

Cash-strapped municipal governments were forced to either cut services, raise local taxes, or hold back on new technologies, including the implementation of advanced life support. Rural areas were also not as well serviced as urban parts of Ontario.

If the provincial government uploads EMS, SEIU will fight to ensure funding remains the same, services are not privatized and service levels remain the same.

EMS injury stats

A recent study says paramedics are much more likely to take time off work because of a job-related injury or illness. 10% of paramedics throughout North America, at any given time, are missing work from illness or injury, compared to 1.3% for the rest of the population.

Needlestick, lifting and moving patients, attacks from violent patients, and ambulance traffic accidents are the most common reasons why paramedics take time off work.

This new evidence sheds new light on why paramedics should have the right to retire at age 60.

Source: www.paramedicsafety.org

Focus on YOU



A 2008 Ford F-150 ambulance for Timiskaming EMS

Timiskaming District EMS (TDEMS)

- TDEMS has 43 paramedics, 24 full-time and 19 part-time.
- TDEMS catchment area is 1.2 million square km, one of the largest in Ontario.
- Major cities in this region include Kirkland Lake, Englehart and Timiskaming Shores communities, which include Lisgard, Hailybury, Cobalt.
- There are many communities in Timiskaming District that cannot be accessed by road. Sometimes EMS workers will have to hop on a boat to reach a community across a lake, or fly to a small community in Northern Ontario to save a life.
- TDEMS paramedics use ski-doods, trains, boats, airplanes, helicopters, and ATVs.
- Have 3 four-wheel drive ambulances to handle country roads in the spring.

Wanted: A few good men and women to serve on SEIU's Paramedic Committee. Call 905-660-1800 x 303 for more info.

If you know an SEIU paramedic who did not receive a copy of this newsletter, please call the office at 905-660-1800 x 329.

PARAMEDIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dwayne Cottel
Lambton County EMS

Robert Keating
Sensenbrenner EMS

David Kennedy
Dufferin County EMS

Andrew Snowdon
Kirkland Lake EMS

Ched Zivic
Haldimand EMS



SEIU Local 1 Canada - 1-800-267-SEIU

2180 Steeles Avenue West, Suite 200, Concord, ON L4K 2Z5