



Knowledge Skill Compassion

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Mr. Chair and Honourable councillors.

My name is Geoff MacBride. I am the President of the Toronto Paramedic Association. We represent the professional interests of Toronto's paramedics and are not a labour organization. Our main interests are the safety and security of our patients and the positive forward movement of the profession of Paramedicine. We are a chapter organization of the Ontario Paramedic Association and the Paramedic Association of Canada.

It has been an interesting year for EMS in Toronto. We have seen the introduction of a new Chief. We have asked and answered many questions from the KPMG report that assessed the quality and needs of various city services. That report clearly identified some areas of concern for EMS in Toronto. First and foremost, that we are at a critical juncture. Our staffing and resources are not sufficient to meet the needs and expectations of the people of this great city. This is an accepted fact. We have looked at the structure of the service we provide and have learned that we do an incredible job of serving our community with these scarce resources and that we the EMS professionals are without a doubt the right people to be providing this service despite what some other interests may be trying to sell at city hall and across the province. We have learned the value of the community medicine program in keeping people from becoming repeat users of the 911 system and its value in keeping ever growing healthcare costs down. We have looked at the provision of non-emergency service in the city at a time when the provincial ombudsman has clearly indicated the value of maintaining that service within EMS and not within the private sector. A year of hard work and challenges that have clearly and unequivocally shown that EMS is a necessary, a valuable and an extremely cost effective and efficient health care service. In fact we are essential to the health and safety of our community.

And that is where we find ourselves today. As you know, EMS is not an essential service. Police, Fire and even the TTC are considered essential. Yet for some reason we are not. This is not the city's fault. When the Harris government enacted Bill 58 years ago creating the entity known as 'essential service agreements', a great disservice was done to the citizens of this province. Instead of designating this obviously essential service as such, they chose to have municipalities and labour representatives hash out some sort of a service provision agreement should there be a likelihood of a labor disruption. This is unfair to everyone. How can we be essential during a possible labour disruption but not the rest of the time? This is in nobody's interest. When people are sick, injured, or dying, they expect that their tax dollar funded EMS service will arrive in a timely manner to provide the high level of care we have come to expect. They do not care about politics. This is also unfair to all municipalities and service providers in this province. Why is the

city forced to spend money and resources every 3 to 4 years to try and come up with an agreement that ensures paramedics are there to serve our community because there is some labour difficulty?

Paramedics and all aspects of an Emergency Medical Service should be designated an essential service, just like Police and Fire with a fair process of binding interest arbitration. Paramedics do not want to be placed in limbo, jeopardizing the safety of our patients because of a difference of opinion between 2 parties.

In an environment where it is already agreed and understood that there are not enough paramedics to meet the needs of our community on a 'business as usual' kind of day, the recent OLRB decision to mandate paramedics at a 85% service level is truly unbelievable. Both the City of Toronto and CUPE 416 agree that 100% of paramedics need to be at work all the time. All that we want in return is an opportunity to take our issues to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party should there be a log jam in negotiations. This is a basic right that this country was built on. 100% Essential service status with binding interest arbitration is not much to ask for. If the TTC is an essential service, how can EMS possibly not be?

Much rhetoric has come out on this issue in the media. This is particularly troubling as Mayor Ford guaranteed during his election campaign, that if elected he would make paramedics essential. We have him on record. It is disappointing to see that Deputy Mayor Doug Holyday has been commenting on this with less than true or accurate facts. He states that essential service status for paramedics will be exceptionally costly with significant wage increases and retirement at the age of 50 amongst other untruths. Toronto paramedics currently enjoy an excellent wage. We are not asking for more money. Paramedics across Ontario have been working for several years now to get a normal retirement age of 60, not 50. This makes sense. Do you want a 65 year old paramedic to be responsible for carrying you up and down stairs? Strangely, the city of Toronto has voted against this designation every time it comes before OMERS. It is very obvious from the Deputy Mayor's remarks that he is being lobbied by interests who have used this argument for years to prevent EMS being designated an essential service. This argument is unfounded, untrue and not in keeping with what the people of this city and this province want and expect. The Deputy Mayor is right about one thing. Decisions made in this area may affect the provision of this service across the province. What is the problem with that? At one time, TEMS and the city of Toronto prided themselves as leaders in the provision of EMS services. Why not be a leader now? Approve this motion. Revisit the OLRB decision with CUPE 416. Agree to lobby the province to create better legislation that truly reflects the needs and realities of EMS. Do the right thing and give paramedics 100% essential service status, just like Police and Fire, with a fair process of binding interest arbitration.

Can you or your loved ones afford not to have us there for you on the day you need us most?

Thank you for your time.