



CACO UPDATE — March 2016

Who speaks for CUPE paramedics with government? With employers?

In the fall of 2015, CUPE among partners including other labour unions representing Ontario paramedics, formed the Paramedic Working Group (PWG).

We want to alert you that the PWG has chosen to end the relationship with the Ontario Paramedic Association (OPA) due to a series of situations and recent OPA comments published in the media.

Why did the PWG take this step?

There are a number of reasons and shared concerns among the labour partners in the PWG about the OPA's interjections on provincial paramedic policy issues. Interjections that we believe undermine the paramedic profession broadly and your workplace rights as individual paramedics.

From a CUPE perspective, there also is significant concern about the unfettered access to CUPE paramedic members in the workplace, provided the OPA by paramedic services employers. We believe it is interfering directly with the union, employer relationship.

CUPE acts on your behalf on paramedic policy issues.

Our ability to best represent you at the provincial level on paramedic policy, is being adversely affected by the OPA's exaggerated claims that they represent the majority view of paramedics. We know, and you know, this is not the case. MPPs who aren't familiar with our sector and what groups have the legal authority to represent paramedics on issues that affect workplace rights, may be easily confused by the OPA's lobby efforts. This is very evident on the issue of a paramedic regulatory college, which CUPE members have widely indicated to CACO they do not support.

Respecting local union bargaining rights is all our responsibility.

There are sufficient indicators that in the last year, a group with ties to the OPA that includes former and current members of the OPA executive were involved in a recent Ontario Labour Board

challenge relating to the representation of CUPE 416 paramedics. Based on available information it appears that this challenge, commonly referred to as “union raiding” and which is not allowed under the Canadian Labour Congress, occurred with the sanction of the OPA president, himself a member of CUPE 416.

Going forward our goal is to ensure that employers and the provincial government hear the perspective of the majority of CUPE’ s paramedic membership. To do this we need your help.

We are strongly urging paramedic locals whose employers are currently:

- allowing the distribution of OPA materials, documents and information using the employer/workplace email, mail or telephone to access CUPE members, to ask their employer to immediately cease the practice;
- deducting donations on behalf of the OPA, to ask their employers to cease and desist the practice effective immediately.

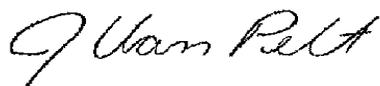
It should be made clear to employers that our CUPE position is that the OPA is interfering with the organic union/employer relationship. Failure by employers to act on these request(s) will result in the union exploring all available options as the legal bargaining agent.

We are always stronger together.

Given the recent actions of the OPA, some CUPE/CACO paramedics have stopped their voluntary donation to the OPA. We applaud their principled position. CACO is respectfully asking individual paramedics who are currently donating to the OPA, to consider doing the same.

As always should you have questions or need guidance about how to proceed please contact me Jeff Van Pelt (CACO Chair, jeffvanpeltpeeb1@hotmail.com). CACO is working in collaboration with your local’ s assigned CUPE National Representative on this important issue.

In solidarity,



Jeff Van Pelt

Chair CUPE Ambulance Committee of Ontario