

October 14, 2016

The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long Term Care
Hepburn Block
10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2C4

**OPEN LETTER TO ONTARIO HEALTH MINISTER, ERIC HOSKINS'
Response to W5 regarding paramedic certification and oversight**

Dear Minister,

As you are aware, Ontario paramedics are among the best trained, if not the best trained emergency first responders in the country. Each day paramedics across our province save many lives. It is highly unfortunate that a recent segment of CTV-W5 leaves viewers with a different impression, specifically that calling 911 is akin to emergency care "roulette".

While our sympathies go out to a grieving widow and the other family whose loved ones suffered great trauma in a vehicle accident, we are deeply troubled about much of the overall content of the episode, which aired the other night (on Saturday, October 8 2016).

Suffice to say that we don't agree with the program's assessment on several fronts. The insinuation made that base hospital doctors have an improper and vested financial interest in maintaining the status quo, the constructed primary care paramedic vs. advanced care paramedics dynamic, and the attempt to minimize the role of paramedic communication officers in assessing patient's emergency medical needs, among them.

We, however, are especially disturbed by comments made by a Canada-wide organization - one that we understand is linked to the Ontario Paramedic Association. The national group's spokesperson appears to offer the hypothesis - with little or no substantiation - that paramedic college regulation is a panacea for gaps in emergency care. No evidence was provided to show any link between the establishment of a regulatory college and any effect on averting tragedies like those described in the CTV-W5 episode. Indeed we believe the evidence suggests the opposite, pointing to the effectiveness of Ontario's paramedic services (despite high call volumes) in providing a consistent and high level of quality emergency medical care that saves countless lives.

We are troubled that one small group has sought to raise the issue of a regulatory college yet again, long after the province's key advisors on health professions regulation have comprehensively studied, broadly consulted, and decisively rejected this very proposal.

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Ontario's multi-layered regulatory regime and certification offers a high degree of patient safety. It is in this regard that we want to extend our appreciation for comments you made (and that aired in the W5 segment) about paramedic oversight, regulation and certification and your clear-sighted recognition that there is widespread opposition to this proposal. We think it was unfortunate that you were put on the spot about an issue that has already been comprehensively reviewed. Like you, we agree that HPRAC's 2013 recommendation against paramedic self-regulation was considered and thoughtful.

We extend our continuing interest in working with you and the health ministry staff on paramedic issues that affect Ontarians broadly and CUPE's more than 5,000 members in the sector specifically. While we believe this issue has been rationally considered and decided, we would be pleased to work with you should its advocates choose to raise it again. Do not hesitate to call if we can be of any assistance to you in this matter.

Sincerely,



Fred Hahn
President
CUPE Ontario



Jeff Van Pelt
Chair
CUPE Ambulance Committee of Ontario