

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CITY OF OTTAWA BEGINS TO ADDRESS THE NEED FOR MORE PARAMEDICS**

**Ottawa, October 28, 2016** – On Wednesday, October 26, 2016, Ottawa City Council took the first initial steps to address what had become a critical shortage of paramedics in our community. By recommending the hiring of 24 new paramedics in June of 2017, and then another 12 in 2018, City Council will hopefully relieve some of the pressure the Ottawa Paramedic Service faces to keep the residents of Ottawa safe.

“Paramedics are critical to the safety of our communities. When you or a loved one experiences a medical emergency, you are counting on there being paramedics available and close by to provide you with the help you urgently need. Unfortunately, for the past few years that has not always been the case” says CUPE 503 President Brian Madden.

With the steady increase in emergency calls and before March of this year, no new paramedics having been hired in almost five years, the response times for the Ottawa Paramedic Service have suffered.

“The staff report submitted to City Council indicated that Ottawa has less paramedics per 1,000 emergency calls than most other major Ontario municipalities including Peel, Hamilton, Durham and York. As a result, our paramedic members have been expected to handle a workload well above the provincial average while their response times to heart attacks and other critical medical emergencies have been climbing” said Madden.

Highlighting the comments made by Councillor Stephen Blais, himself a survivor of a sudden cardiac arrest, Madden noted that in responding to a medical emergency, every second counts.

Madden says the paramedic members of Local 503 appreciate the relief that if confirmed, these new hires will bring, but he worries that in deferring needed paramedic hiring for so many years, City Council seemed to have forgotten the lessons learned from the Alice Martin Coroner’s Inquest. That inquest, which looked into the 2003 death of an elderly resident of rural Ottawa, found that her death was due in large part to the failure of the City to hire much needed paramedics.

“City Council’s decision is a good one but I just hope that we don’t have to wait another five years for Council to do this again” said Madden.

CUPE 503 is the largest CUPE Local in Eastern Ontario representing thousands of public and private sector employees across Eastern Ontario and up the Ottawa Valley.

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