



Dedicated to the Memory of

Gord Armes: Jan. 1952-Jan. 2002

Mark Finney: Aug. 1957-Jan. 2002



lights and sirens

A Publication for Paramedics by Paramedics about Paramedics

OPSEU Ambulance Division

February 2002

Welcome to a new era

The majority of the divestments have occurred. The last two years have been ones of uncertainty and confusion. We have lost members as a result of legislation. Many of them were denied the right to chose their union.

The divestments have also given other paramedics the right to chose. When presented with this opportunity, the choice has overwhelmingly been OPSEU.

Even though different locals, means of service delivery and geography exist, now is the time to regroup.

Through education, communication, coordinated bargaining and public campaigns, we must promote Paramedics as pre-hospital professionals and ensure fairness and equality for the profession. OPSEU has committed the resources to bring such resolve.

The Ambulance Division has more than 20 years experience representing Paramedics in all forms. The Division is comprised of Paramedics, elected by Paramedics, whose goal is to represent and promote Paramedics as professionals. With the resources of OPSEU, there will be change.

Lights and Sirens will be a quarterly publication by the Ambulance Division, to ensure the sharing of ideas and progress with the members at large.

It is to be used as a resource and communication tool, to assist us in moving towards our common goals. It is YOUR publication, so please contribute.

On behalf of the Ambulance Division, welcome to a new era.

Jamie Ramage
Chair
Ambulance Division

Life after OPSEU

On Jan. 1, 2001, the County of Essex assumed the responsibility for Land Ambulance, causing the divestment of all existing unionized employees from Windsor Provincial Ambulance.

OPSEU filed with the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) to keep their former unionized employees, but was unsuccessful. The County then tried to force the members into the existing Teamsters Bargaining Unit.

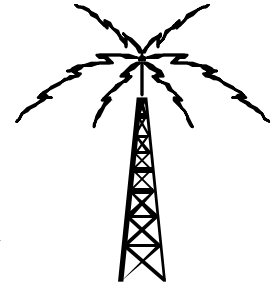
This was challenged by the CUPE unit, and a labour board hearing is scheduled for April.

In the meantime, call volume has increased, staffing is short and the Ministry keeps adding on more regulations.

At the time of the divestment, Essex County signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Ministry of Health which agreed to honor the OPS Collective Agreement. However, the County switched the

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Communication Officers: We want representation from you



The Ambulance division bylaws are inclusive of Ambulance Services and Dispatch Centers.

We are looking for a “Dispatch Advisor” to serve on the Division. The advisor will have a voice but no vote.

The advisor will be the contact person for all dispatch issues across the province. The advisor will also attend Executive meetings in order for the Executive to make informed and accurate decisions as they relate to dispatch issues.

The Division recommends one of the following methods of choosing this representative:

1. Dispatchers as a group decide on one person as your representative. Forward the name and contact information to Jamie (*see contact list on Page 6*), **or**
2. Each dispatch centre, choose one representative. Forward the names and contact information to Jamie. At the next Executive meeting, the Division will choose the representative from the submitted names.

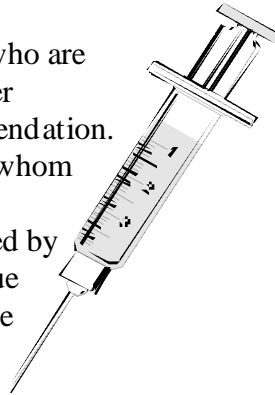
Influenza vaccination

The influenza vaccine is one of the requirements under the Ambulance Act.

OPSEU has and will continue to challenge and speak out about the vaccine based on the following:

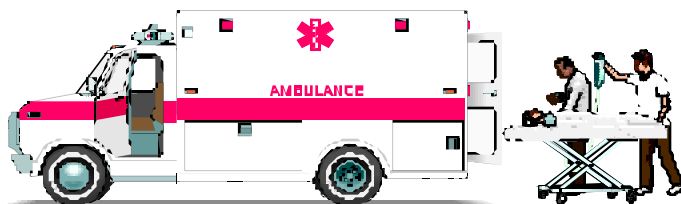
Paramedics are the only professionals who are legislated to be immunized. For every other profession and citizen, it is only a recommendation. Paramedics are the only professionals for whom non-compliance results in suspension.

OPSEU will support challenges launched by any organization. OPSEU will also continue to research other means of redress to ensure Paramedics have the same rights and treatment as every other citizen of Ontario.



We recommend the following to our members:

- Comply with the requirements under the act.
- When submitting proof/exemption of immunization to the employer, do so under duress.
- If any medical complications arise as a result of immunization, file a WSIB claim with the employer.



Life after OPSEU

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paramedics to the County’s benefit package, forcing members to take unpaid sick days. Under this package, each time sick leave is taken the first eight hours is unpaid. Paramedics also had to push the County for top-up for Parental Leave.

To make matters worse, the County is deducting Teamsters dues from the paramedics even though they are not being represented by that union. Paramedics have filed a complaint with the OLRB to deal with ~~that issue.~~

OPSEU paramedics negotiated a 12 per cent increase with AA&M Volunteer Ambulance effective Apr. 1, 2001.

Essex County, who contracts AA&M’s services, have refused to agree to the second year of the settlement reached with AA&M.

OPSEU at work

Hamilton paramedics fight for OPSEU

Members want their own bargaining unit

After eighteen months of litigation, the OLRB ruled on November 23, that approximately 200 Paramedics in the Region of Hamilton Wentworth / New City of Hamilton would be represented by OPSEU.

The initial certification application was contested by both the employer (City of Hamilton) and CUPE, even though the Paramedics voted 99.5 per cent in favour of OPSEU.

Needless, costly and ongoing litigation was generated by Bill 136. The City of Hamilton attempted to place Paramedics

within CUPE's large municipal bargaining unit. That created additional labour chaos, said local OPSEU president Mario Posteraro.

"Poor employee moral, high staff turnover, high employee stress, leading to increases in sick time as well as a variety of unfair labour practice complaints are the end result of the employer refusing to voluntarily recognise the union Paramedics chose almost two years ago," he said.

The unfair labour practice complaints were scheduled for pre-hearing on February 12.

Haldimand County set to vote on Mar. 7

Haldimand County began operating ambulance services as of Feb. 1. This encompasses Dunnville, Hagersville and Caledonia.

OPSEU attempted to negotiate a transition agreement with Haldimand County. This agreement would have provided for a wage improvement and standardized working conditions for the paramedics.

This agreement was intended to be in force until a new collective agreement was negotiated with the employer.

Unfortunately, SEIU refused to participate in the transition agreement. As a result, seniority and wage issues for Dunnville and Hagersville paramedics were addressed at an OLRB hearing on Feb. 22.

OPSEU was successful at the OLRB in dovetailing seniority for all Haldimand County paramedics and establishing an hourly wage rate of \$21.40. A representation vote, agreed to by the parties, has been scheduled for Mar. 7, 2002.

No more outdoor ambulance washing for Tillsontburg paramedics

On January 9, 2002, the Paramedics of Oxford County overwhelmingly voted for OPSEU at a representation vote against the Canadian Auto Workers.

The "new" Oxford County EMS is composed of Tillsontburg and Woodstock.

OPSEU was successful in negotiating a transition agreement, which included a wage increase for all full time medics to \$21.10 and ensured a smooth and equitable amalgamation of the two services.

The transition agreement along with the "old" Woodstock collective agreement will be in force and effect until a "new" collective agreement is negotiated with the County.

The "old" Tillsontburg medics are looking forward to no longer having to park, wash and maintain their vehicles outside, sometimes in minus 30 degree weather.



OPSEU at work

Simcoe County chose OPSEU

Simcoe County was one of the most complicated and confusing situations that could arise from the government's decision to download the responsibility of providing ambulance services to the Upper Tier Municipalities (UTMs).

Seven services were legislated by three different pieces of legislation as well as two different unions involved in the process! Alliston and Barrie were hospital services and therefore covered by the Hospital Labour Disputes Arbitration Act. Alliston had OPSEU as a bargaining agent. Barrie had SEIU as a bargaining agent. Both had successor rights.

Wasaga Beach was a municipally run service governed by the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act (CECBA). OPSEU was the bargaining agent, with no successor rights.

Orillia was a Ministry of Health service, with OPSEU as their bargaining agent, with no successor rights. It was also governed by CECBA.

Bradford and Collingwood were both private services and Crown Agents with no successor rights, with OPSEU as their bargaining agent and CECBA as the governing legislation.

Midland was a private service, a Crown Agent with no successor rights, represented by SEIU.

The new employer, Simcoe County, contracted Health Trust Pre Hospital Services Inc. to administer the service. This meant that a "runoff" vote had to take place between OPSEU and SEIU. The paramedics voted 85 per cent in favour of having OPSEU as their bargaining agent.

For many reasons, not the least of which is the lack of paramedics to fill shifts so the bargaining team can get

together, OPSEU is just now in the process of negotiating a first collective agreement. Paramedics are currently being paid an hourly rate of \$20.40, and this creates a real retention problem due to the higher wages of York Region immediately to the south. Simcoe County is currently short about 20 paramedics, without taking into account the 40 paramedics that are required to meet the 1996 response time mandate set by the Ontario government.

Brant County is negotiating

On October 16, 2000, OPSEU was certified as the bargaining agent for Brant County Ambulance.

OPSEU is presently negotiating with Brant County for a new collective agreement.

Gord Armes was an activist and a professional

Gord Armes, a Halton region paramedic and president of his local, has died after a struggle with pancreatic cancer. He was 50.

Gord always treated both his patients and colleagues as if they were family.

He was president of Local 207 for 20 years and a past member of the division's executive. He volunteered for several committees that benefited all members of the union.

"Gord was a great role

model for union activists, especially those in the Ambulance Sector," said Brenda Wilson Young, Region 2 Director. "He will be greatly missed for his knowledge and sincere dedication to all our causes."

Red light warning

Many centers are using cameras to identify drivers who run red lights. Running a red light leads to many incidents of needless property damage, personal injury and deaths each year.

The Highway Traffic Act is very clear on how paramedics will proceed at a red light when responding to an emergency.

You must come to a complete stop. All warning systems must be activated and you will proceed only when safe to do so.

A complete stop is defined as lasting three seconds. Anything less is considered a rolling stop.

During the execution of our duties, there are many extenuating circumstances. Please exercise discretion and caution.



It's that time again

Local are reminded to submit their dues

The Ambulance Division is a self-funded Occupational Division within OPSEU. It is a vital element in providing leadership, assistance and representation for our members.

The ability to perform these functions is partially funded by Divisional dues, which are paid annually from local funds, not by individual members.

Article 12.1 of the Division bylaws states: "the level of Division dues shall be \$2 per member per year, with a \$100 minimum, per Ambulance service/Dispatch centre."

This is a new beginning, therefore the dues calculations will be based on the fiscal year starting with January 2002.

There are many newly-formed locals and restructured locals, who may not have yet received start-up funds or their dues rebates from Head Office. Divisional dues payments are stayed until such time as your local has a cash flow from Head Office. At that time, a full year's payment will be expected. If this is your local's situation, please notify the treasurer.

Cheques should be made payable to "OPSEU Ambulance Division" and sent to:

**OPSEU Ambulance Division
c/o Box 683, Station B
Sudbury
P3E 4R6**

Get educated!



- **New local?**
- **New negotiating team?**
- **New local executive?**
- **Thirsty for knowledge?**

OPSEU offers a number of educationals tailored to meet your specific needs and delivered at the local level.

Please contact your Regional office for available courses. If you need any further assistance please contact your Regional Director, Mario or Jamie.

**The Ambulance
Division has a new
phone number!**

1-289-260-4728



**Contact us so we
can contact you**

Submissions? Questions? Inquiries?

Please forward them to Jamie by the first week of April for inclusion on the Executive meeting agenda. General questions and submissions will be included in the next edition of *Lights and Sirens*.

We need to build our contact list. Until we have an accurate membership list, we will be mailing *Lights and Sirens* to a specific contact at each service. This contact will then distribute them to the bases. If you would like a copy electronically, please forward your information to Chris.

**AMBULANCE DIVISION EXECUTIVE
2001 - 2003**

Chair	Jamie Ramage	<i>RamageRider@aol.com</i>
Vice Chair	Mario Posteraro	<i>mpmario1@hotmail.com</i>
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Region 1 Director	John Rinehart	<i>j.rinehart@rogers.com</i>
Region 2 Director Bargaining Coordinator	Brenda Wilson Young	<i>pairamedics@primus.ca</i>
Region 3 Director	Carl Eichenberger	<i>carlike@bmts.com</i>
Region 4 Director Communications Coordinator	Chris Barry	<i>michelle.barry2@sympatico.ca</i>
Region 6 Director	Darryl Taylor	<i>darryl.taylor@sympatico.ca</i>