

Dear MPP:

The phones are ringing off the hook and every day there are fewer staff to answer them at Ontario's ambulance dispatch centers. Our emergency services are in a state of emergency.

Low wages and an impossible workload are making it difficult to do these jobs now, and leaving the province poorly prepared for any disaster that might occur in future. Emergency Medical Dispatchers across Ontario have had to put 911 calls on hold and leave lines ringing because of a serious staffing crisis caused by low salaries and stress. Workload has tripled in some areas over the past decade and staffing levels have not kept up.

The calls keep coming in, and, more and more, there is no one to answer them.

People are leaving for better-paying positions. Why? Salaries at ambulance dispatch centers are as low as \$38,000 per year, compared with approximately \$60,000 for dispatchers with fire departments, police departments and other employers.

"Good salaries make it possible to attract and retain good people." That's what the integrity commissioner said about your job. Surely this applies to others as well.

Many shifts do not have full complement of staff, and those who are still on the job face other problems such as poor equipment, lack of experience, lack of training on new legislative requirements, and lack of supervision. Supervisors, management and partially trained personnel have been used to dispatch ambulances.

Dispatchers have had no time off and are burning out. Many people who wanted to make this a career are now looking for other jobs.

These workers are about to bargain a new contract. If they do not receive a significant wage increase there will be no one left to answer the phone when your constituents call 911. And you will have to answer to them.

Please send a message to Health Minister Tony Clement that this is an emergency. Ontario cannot afford to walk away from its responsibility to pay these Emergency Medical Dispatchers what they are worth.

Sincerely,