

October 29, 2021

The Honourable Monte McNaughton
Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
400 University Avenue, 14th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1T7

Dear Minister:

I write in follow-up to my correspondence of November 20, 2020, regarding the establishment of a standalone section 21 committee for the paramedic sector.

OPSEU/SEFPO is extremely proud to represent some 2,200 members in 22 paramedic services, four broader public sector Central Ambulance Communications Centres (CACCs) and 11 Ontario Public Service CACCs. Our members are always seeking new ways of strengthening occupational health and safety while improving service delivery.

One important improvement that they have identified is the creation of an EMS section 21 committee. As I mentioned previously, this committee would provide you with expert advice on enforcement, regulation and policy. Currently, emergency medical services (EMS) is a subcommittee of the Health Care Section 21 Committee. This two-level structure is not optimal.

First, EMS work is extremely diverse and encompasses practices not found in other health care professions. Paramedics are governed by the Ontario Ambulance Act and deal in strictly pre-hospital care, including specialized services like tactical and community paramedics, COVID-19 swabbing and safe injection site medics.

Second, a two-level structure hinders the development of materials, pandemic advice and urgent items needed in the field.

Third, the scope of paramedic practice is expanding rapidly. New technologies are being introduced, and paramedics are being called to increasingly remote locations. This means new health and safety issues arise that must be addressed effectively to prevent hazards to workers.

Nothing can match the experience of front-line workers. Paramedics have an unequalled understanding of their sector. A section 21 committee would enjoy the autonomy of bringing their knowledge directly to you. It would also help the Chief Prevention Officer in his mission to provide expert guidance to Ontario's workplaces.

Paramedics inside and outside OPSEU/SEFPO have been calling for a section 21 committee for almost two years. I understand that on February 21 of this year, the Prevention Council for workplace health and safety passed a motion recommending you approve the request for a standalone committee.

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Minister, I respectfully ask that you agree to their request. I can see nothing but wins for all concerned: for you as minister, for paramedics in terms of improved health and safety, and for Ontario citizens in terms of enhanced EMS services.

I look forward to your reply and renew my offer of assistance.

Sincerely,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President, OPSEU/SEFPO

c: Ian Arthur, MPP, Kingston and the Islands