

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2006

Professional Paramedic Association of Ottawa /
L'Association Professionnelle des Paramédics d'Ottawa

OttawaParamedics.ca
613-244-0333



Keeping the PPAO busy

By: Suzanne Noël

It has been a busy year for the PPAO here in Ottawa.

The Pre-Authorized Debit system is finally nearing completion after over 10 months of extremely hard work.

A major overhaul was performed on the members side of our website to make it even more user friendly.

We even had to turn hundreds of people away from our car seat inspection clinics because they

have been so busy.

Our Board of Directors has also been meeting with new mayoral candidates.

In addition, several projects were started that will be ongoing through the spring.

The ICE campaign is a program originally developed in the UK that targets the public who use cellular phones. By listing an emergency contact number under the word ICE (In Case of

Emergency) paramedics can have easy access to an emergency contact who can provide us with important information.

Operation Brain Freeze follows the lead of the Sudbury paramedics who developed this program to educate children about the importance of riding their bikes safely and wearing bike helmets properly.

Our 2006 invitational hockey tournament raised over \$3000 for Roger's House.

Last but not least, we have a whole crew of paramedics working on preparations for EMS week 2006.

NATIONAL EMS WEEK (MAY 14-20, 2006)

THE PPAO'S EMS WEEK AGENDA

SAT MAY 13	SUN MAY 14	MON MAY 15	TUE MAY 16	WED MAY 17	THR MAY 18	FRI MAY 19	SAT MAY 20
EARLY BIRD EMS WEEK KICK-OFF	OFFICIAL START OF EMS WEEK	KISS 105.3FM MORNING SHOW 07:30-09:00	ROGERS CABLE 22 DAYTIME TV (ACP's) 11:00-12:00	ROGERS CABLE 22 DAYTIME TV (MARINE) 11:00-12:00	ROGERS CABLE 22 DAYTIME TV (TACTICAL) 11:00-12:00	BYWARD MARKET PARAMEDIC DISPLAYS 10:00-17:00	BYWARD MARKET PARAMEDIC DISPLAYS 10:00-17:00
CELEBRITY CPR AT HQ 09:00-12:00 TWO DOZEN LOCAL CELEBS LEARN CPR FROM PARAMEDICS	OPERATION BRAIN FREEZE START OF BICYCLE AND HELMET SAFETY FOR KIDS	ROGERS CABLE 22 DAYTIME TV (PCP's) 11:00-12:00	AGM #1 19:00-21:00	A-CHANNEL CABLE 06 NEWS AT NOON AGM #2 19:00-21:00		ROGERS CABLE 22 DAYTIME TV (BIKE) 11:00-12:00	

The PPAO will also have nightly appearances on various Ottawa news channels to promote the profession of paramedicine. Please contact the PPAO at cpr@OttawaParamedics.ca if you want to help with any events or activities.

Donate old uniforms until EMS week

By Suzanne Noël



When Ottawa Paramedic Service issued its new navy blue uniforms a few years ago, Tim O'Neill wondered what to do with his old white uniform shirts. It seemed a waste of good clothing to throw them away, so Tim came up with the idea to recycle them.

He took his idea to Parliament Hill where he met with a few people from Nunavut. From there he went to the Cuban Embassy and got them on-board. Together they initiated what has become the largest paramedic uniform recycling program in Canada. Thanks to Ottawa Paramedics donating their used uniforms, first responders, paramedics, firefighters and search and rescue members in places such as Cuba, the Yukon, Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Honduras have been outfitted with recycled uniforms.

Some of the small communities in these areas can only be accessed by plane or boat, and are a far distance from any other communities. Amenities are few and far between for those who live and work in these areas. With the donated uniforms emergency services members are properly outfitted, easily identified and united in their work.

This year marks the third round of uniform collec-

tions since Tim began this project. Over 3000 items have been donated in the past three years. In the last uniform drive before Christmas, this campaign collected a total of 1789 used and discarded uniforms for the following developing areas:

- Yukon – 468 items
- Northwest Territories – 485 items
- Nunavut – 417 items
- Honduras – 435 items

Tim O'Neill's gang of volunteers collected, prepared and shipped a total of 570 pants, 399 long sleeve shirts, 668 short sleeve shirts, 83 jackets, 39 fleece, 21 pairs of boots and 9 other accessories.

We are currently ramping up for another uniform drive. Please help support this important cause by dropping off any used uniform items. Drop off bins will be provided in men's and women's change rooms at Headquarters from May 1 to May 15.

Events like this are very important to develop strong bonds with members of other communities. We are one of the few services in Canada to have such an enormous program so help keep it going by donating your uniforms today!



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Educate the young ones

By Suzanne Noël

During his many months of work instituting a new Pre-Authorized Debit system for the Professional Paramedic Association of Ottawa, President Darryl Wilton discovered a surprising fact. Most new paramedics are oblivious to the enormous changes that have impacted our profession over such a short period of time.

It wasn't that long ago that working as a paramedic was nowhere near the job it is today.

I'm sure many of you remember working for a minimal pay check, \$2 per hour standbys, call backs, 4 part time jobs, living with a pager attached to your hip and driving great distances to work in volunteer services because no full time jobs existed.

Many paramedics who have been hired in the last couple of years might think that these are old campfire stories, but these conditions were "the norm" in Eastern Ontario just 5 years ago. Most of us couldn't imagine what it was like 30 years ago. Paramedics across Canada have gone through massive efforts to pave the way to what this profession has become today.

In Ottawa, the PPAO has diligently given presentations to paramedic students at Algonquin College, La Cité Collégiale and St. Lawrence College on the importance of all levels of paramedic associations and the

number of changes that can occur when paramedics get involved in their profession.

Information has consistently been made available to future members via posters, newsletters, annual meetings, websites and email but it seems this has not been enough to increase awareness of why being involved in your profession is so essential.

Why get involved?

It's almost ironic that during EMS week, we will put so much focus on educating the public about our profession, when students and new employees don't know about our roots.

More work needs to be done to educate both students and paramedics about the evolution of our profession. The colleges and universities should also provide more information to all students from RPN's to HCA's to RN's to MD's.

Employers should also support staff who are willing to volunteer to provide information displays and sessions to the public. Here in Ottawa, the support has been excellent but this level of cooperation needs to be extended to all services.

More paramedics need to get involved.

Great progress has been made for the profession of paramedi-

cine, but we are still in our infancy. If you have a rookie partner who isn't as up-to-date on progress, talk about it during your shift and let them know what it was like 25 years ago – or even only 5 years ago for that matter.

If you have ideas to increase public knowledge of paramedics, make these ideas a reality by contacting your paramedic association. If you feel strongly about issues such as early retirement or the need to hire more paramedics, get involved in the lobbying process.

When members get involved, decision makers become informed and progress is made. This paramedic profession has evolved greatly from only 5 years ago. With persistent effort from our local, provincial and national paramedic associations, the progress will only continue.

During EMS week 2006 (May 14-20), it is important to remember that over 14000 paramedics across Canada volunteer to pay annual dues to be members of various paramedic associations. Many of these paramedics have gone through considerable lengths to pave the way to what this profession has become today. Paramedics across Canada should be very proud of what our profession has become in such a short period of time.

If you are not currently active in your profession, you should be. Get informed, get involved and seriously consider joining a paramedic association during EMS week 2006.



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Samantha Lie

OttawaParamedics.ca shift exchanger

By: Suzanne Noël

Have you ever wanted a day off and been unable to get vacation approval or don't have any more vacation time to use? If you are a member of the PPAO there may be another option to free up that day you need!

By visiting the shift exchanger at OttawaParamedics.ca you will have access to other members looking for days off and the ability to post notice for those days you would rather be playing than working.

Working on a platoon schedule makes it difficult to ever see the co-workers who could do a shift exchange for you. On the web-

site you will have full access to every person on every platoon who is looking for a day off. The website can be accessed 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world. So when you are on that Caribbean vacation and would really like to extend it a few more days you could log on to the website and try and find someone who would cover your shift in exchange for you prolonging their winter ski trip :)

The shift exchanger allows you to edit your shifts at any time and will automatically delete shifts once the day has passed. On any given day there are usually quite a wide variety of high and low

density shifts to choose from.

The PPAO shift exchanger is one of the highest traffic pages on the OttawaParamedics.ca website. It gets hundreds of hits a week.

During the month of April, this is what was up for grabs on the shift exchanger:

- 21 shifts available
- 11 ACP shifts both High and Low density, nights and days
- 11 PCP shifts both High and Low density, nights and days

To give you an example of how effective the shift exchanger can be, just talk to Matt Smith, who seems to be the most frequent user of this feature. Without using a single vacation day, Matt has managed to use shift exchanges to take several weeks off throughout the year. This has allowed him to go skiing across Canada and the USA in the past few years. Matt has also been able to visit other places such as Ecuador, Haiti and Guatemala all with the help of shift exchanges.

So the next time you are stuck working a day you'd rather not be, check out the PPAO shift exchanger and make yourself and someone else happy!

NOTE: The shift exchanger is available to members only.

DETAILS	DATE	RANK	HOURS	BASE
VIEW	April 3, 2006	ACP	1845 - 0645	High Density
VIEW	April 4, 2006	ACP	1845 - 0645	High Density
VIEW	April 6, 2006	PCP	1745 - 0545	Navan
VIEW	April 7, 2006	PCP	1745 - 0545	Manotick
VIEW	April 12, 2006	ACP	1845 - 0645	High Density
VIEW	April 13, 2006	PCP	1845 - 0645	Osgoode
VIEW	April 13, 2006	ACP	1845 - 0645	High Density
VIEW	April 17, 2006	ACP	0645 - 1845	Osgoode
VIEW	April 18, 2006	ACP	0645 - 1845	Osgoode
VIEW	April 26, 2006	ACP	0645 - 1845	Osgoode
VIEW	April 27, 2006	ACP	0645 - 1845	Osgoode
VIEW	April 28, 2006	PCP	0730 - 0730	High Density
VIEW	May 1, 2006	ACP	1845 - 0645	Osgoode
VIEW	May 2, 2006	ACP	1845 - 0645	Osgoode
VIEW	May 16, 2006	PCP	1830 - 0630	High Density
VIEW	June 28, 2006	PCP	0530 - 1730	High Density
VIEW	June 29, 2006	PCP	0530 - 1730	High Density
VIEW	August 9, 2006	PCP	1730 - 0530	Carp
VIEW	August 10, 2006	PCP	1730 - 0530	Carp
VIEW	August 28, 2006	PCP	1730 - 0530	High Density
VIEW	August 29, 2006	PCP	1730 - 0530	High Density

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Cathie and Beth fight!

By: Suzanne Noël

For those of you who haven't yet heard, two of our PPAO members have become world class athletes. This April, Cathie Tessier and Mary-Beth Stanistreet will be competing for Canada in the WFK World Kickboxing Championships in Uzbekistan.

Earlier this year, Cathie and Beth traveled to London, Ontario to compete with other athletes for the chance to represent their country on the world class level. Based on solid performances in London and in other previous matches, these two women won the honours of being on Canada's national kickboxing team.

Beth and Cathie are members of the Council of Amateur Sport Kickboxing and have attended several training camps and passed various conditioning checkpoints in order to get to this level of competition.

Last year, Beth traveled to South Africa to fight on the world stage and made Canada proud by coming home with a gold medal. Quite an accomplishment in itself, but what makes it even more impressive is that she had only been kickboxing for a year prior to the competition and had no previous martial arts background.

This year will be Cathie's first trip to the world champion-

ships. She has previous training in Kendo and Jujitsu and has been kickboxing for the past year.

The cost for competing in South Asia is not cheap – in order to secure a spot in the competition Beth and Cathie require a total of \$6000 to pay their way. A fundraiser held at the Bulldog pub earlier this month helped raised significant funds for their trip.

Over 300 friends, coworkers, hospital staff, firefighters, police officers and other supporters attended the fundraiser. Several of those in attendance won prizes donated by the Bulldog Pub, i-Tan Advanced Tanning Studios, New Body Dimensions gym, Nomad Kickboxing & Boxing Club (where Beth and Cathie train), local restaurants and Pop-eye's sports nutrition centre.

When the night was over, a grand total of \$3100 was raised – over half of the funds needed to get Beth and Cathie to Uzbekistan! A huge thank you goes out to everyone who helped make this fundraiser a success.

Cathie and Beth leave on April 24 to attend the championship. They are scheduled to return on May 3, hopefully with a few gold medals around their necks.

On behalf of the PPAO, good luck ladies!

PPAO NOTICE OF ELECTION FOR JUNE 2006

The PPAO has 12 executive positions comprised of 4 officers and 8 directors.

The executive alternate on 2 year terms with half being elected on even years and the other half being elected on odd years.

If executive positions are occupied by interim officers or directors, they must go to vote at the next possible election.

Only full paid members can be nominated and elected to the executive.

The following chart identifies which positions are voted on odd (O) years and which positions are voted on even (E) years and which interim positions (I) are going to a forced vote (X) this year.

OFFICER POSITIONS

President	O
Vice-President	E
Secretary	O I X
Treasurer	E I X

DIRECTOR POSITIONS

Professional Development	O I X
Community Services	O I X
Membership Services	E I X
Media Relations	E I X
Communications	O I X
Special Projects	E I X
Support Services	O I X
Political Affairs	E I X

PPAO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS (two for you to choose from)

Tue May 16, 2006
(19:00hrs-21:00hrs)

Wed May 17, 2006
(19:00hrs-21:00hrs)

INFO:

OttawaParamedics.ca
VISIT YOUR LOGIN AREA

FREE PIZZA

PPAO AGM's are always held during EMS week
2006 EMS WEEK (MAY 14 - MAY 20)



Samantha Lie

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OPA LICENSE PLATE REBATE (PPAO MEMBERS ONLY)

Buy your OPA license plates for \$78.85 (available at the Westgate Mall MTO Office). The MTO will give you back \$10.00 for your old plates. Once you submit your receipt to the PPAO, we will provide you with a \$40.00 rebate.



Educating the nurses

By: Suzanne Noël

Spring has arrived and with the start of a new season comes the start of many new projects for the PPAO.

Tammy Dupuis has been extremely busy collecting a huge database of contact information from various health care facilities in the city.

As mentioned in Canadian Emergency News magazine, one of our main goals this year is to educate other health care workers about our scope of practice.

By the end of the year the PPAO wants to have an electronic database that includes every health care facility in the city.

What is the purpose of all this?

During the past three years the

PPAO has managed to educate the media about the scope of practice of paramedics and the fact that ambulance drivers haven't existed since the 80's.

It is now a rare occurrence that we are referred to as anything but paramedics in any local media release. Our goal is to also educate the health care field in a similar fashion.

A number of important agencies will receive information by fax telling them about our scope of practice and levels of training. Staff at these facilities will also be faxed invites to paramedic events such as golf tournaments, hockey tournaments, and parties so that there is a social and personal aspect as well.

In the big picture, interaction will

create communication and communication will create great relationships.

Hopefully, we can get the ER triage nurses to stop announcing "Team Leader to triage an ambulance".

Awards 101

By: Suzanne Noël

This year, we have managed to recruit several new volunteers to help get a number of projects up and running.

Did you know that fire fighters and police officers become automatically eligible for many awards while paramedics have to go through a rigorous application process to receive the same entitlements?

Megan Wall has been spending her spare time researching paramedic awards. Across the country there are many awards that exist for paramedics and Megan has been working diligently to find out what they all are.

New recruit Scott Martin is also doing a length of service research project to determine award eligibility. If you receive an email from Scott, please respond promptly so he can finish creating his database of everyone's length of service (including public service).

It is our hope that the PPAO can take the lead on nominating paramedics so members of our profession receive the recognition they deserve.

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EMS week in Ottawa

By: Suzanne Noël

Do you ever get tired of being referred to as "ambulance" or hearing a patient be told "your taxi is here"? Well, EMS week occurs across the country May 14-20, 2006 and the goal of the PPAO this year is EDUCATION! A massive effort will be launched to educate everyone from the general public to physicians about what our profession is and why being referred to as anything other than a "paramedic" is inappropriate.

The PPAO has already been extremely successful in past efforts to increase the media's knowledge and awareness of what paramedics do. This year, the focus will be on educating medical professionals.

Beginning EMS week, hospitals will be receiving faxes, emails, posters and verbal information on what a paramedic is, our

scope of practice and why "ambulance" can be a "bad" word. Not many people realize that Advanced Care Paramedics perform more controlled medical acts than any other health profession with the exception of physicians. All paramedics are highly trained, skilled medical professionals who do a whole lot more than drive a big truck with fancy lights.

Our hope is that by the end of 2006, significant progress will have been made in educating RN's, MD's, RT's, RPN's and other health care workers about the field of paramedicine.

Andrew Gleeson and Giuseppe Federico are also busy planning the public information display that the PPAO will be setting up in the Byward Market (Ottawa's busiest tourist trap). The public will be able to view paramedic

vehicles, a large display with photos of paramedics in action, and various multi-media presentations. Our volunteers will be there every day to answer any questions relating to the complex skills paramedics provide.

Rob Wilson has become a regular paramedic feature on our local Rogers television station and he has managed to secure a spot each day of EMS week for an interview with a member of each of our specialty teams. Plans are also in motion to have us featured on A-channel as well. Rob is currently working on a celebrity CPR course that has already attracted several local councillors, media personalities and sports celebrities so they can be certified in CPR along with members of the general public.

Paramedics are strongly encouraged to get involved during EMS week. If you are interested, please send an email to cpr@OttawaParamedics.ca and get ready to have a tonne of fun with the PPAO!



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You need to understand this

By: Darryl Wilton

A couple of years back, I was attending CME's on my days off to tell people about all of the hard work that was being done to ensure that paramedics would be recognized as a Public Safety Occupation and receive early retirement benefits. This means that instead of retiring at 65 years old, paramedics could retire at 60 years old with no penalties or reduced pension benefits.

The CUPE Ambulance Paramedics of BC and Paramedic Association of Canada (led by past president and Ottawa PTL Paul Morneau) put an enormous amount of effort and money into the early retirement lobby campaign. As a result of their coordinated effort, in 2005 parliament decided to unanimously amend the Federal Income Tax Act in favour of paramedics.

This decision changed the Federal Income Tax Act so paramedics would finally be recognized as a Public Safety Occupation alongside police officers and fire fighters.

Aside from the prestige of being recognized as a unique and essential public safety occupation, this meant the federal government was ready to allow paramedics to make slightly larger pension contributions off each paycheck so we could retire 5 years earlier with no penalty.

This unique benefit is very important to our profession because 96% of paramedics don't even make it to age 55 due to illness or injury.

Although, the federal government

handed us a win, a few more hurdles still stood in the way: the provincial government, the OMERS pension plan and our employer.

During 2005, Dalton McGuinty's provincial liberals were putting the finishing touches on Bill 206. This bill was designed to make changes to the way the OMERS pension plan was administrated. Paramedics contribute to the OMERS pension. In order to receive the same early retirement benefits as police officers and fire fighters, we would need to be included in 5 important items of the Bill.

In a nutshell, the first 4 items identify a profession as being eligible for early retirement benefits and the 5th item is what glues the first 4 items together in order to make one's profession automatically eligible for early retirement.

The million dollar question is, "What happened with Bill 206"?

As it currently stands, paramedics have been given the first 4 items but only police officers and fire fighters received all 5 items.

So, how do paramedics get that 5th item so we can be automatically eligible for early retirement?

When the new OMERS Act takes effect later this year, paramedic unions in Ontario will have 24 months to lobby the 14 representatives who sit on the pension plan's Sponsor's Corporation.

The Sponsor's Corporation is set up with a balance on each side of the

fence. This means 7 of the sponsors represent employer groups and 7 represent employee groups. At least 10 representatives need to vote in favour of paramedics earning that 5th item so we can have automatic eligibility to retire early with no penalty just like police officers and fire fighters.

Most of the focus will be on having the 7 employer groups recognize that paramedics are entitled to the exact same benefits as police officers and fire fighters.

Why does more work have to be done on employer groups?

Employers match employee contributions dollar-for-dollar and this means employers would be spending money a little earlier and they don't like to do that.

How would it work?

As soon as paramedics achieve all 5 early retirement criteria by winning 10/14 votes, paramedics and employers can make slightly higher biweekly contributions (2.33% instead of 1.4%) if that is what we desire. Nobody will be forced.

Is there a light at the end of the long dark tunnel?

Yes. While retiring early is the key, the good news is our union can begin local negotiations immediately to raise our current pension contribution from 1.4% to 2.33% (matched by the employer) if that is what paramedics desire. Even if we don't get all 5 items for another 10 years, we will have been paying into our own supplemental pension plan (apart from all other OMERS members) the whole time.

NOTE: This text provides the reader with an interpretation of recent changes to the Federal Income Tax Act and OMERS pension plan. This text is not definitive and should not be regarded as financial or legal advice.

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