



Representing the Districts of Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay
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October 15, 2024

Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health
5th Floor - 777 Bay St.
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 2J3
Via Email: Sylvia.Jones@ontario.ca

RE: Critical Shortage of Paramedics in Northwestern Ontario

Dear Honourable Sylvia Jones:

The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) is made up of 37 municipalities, representing over 232,300 people according to the 2021 Ontario Census, and extends from the Manitoba Boarder in the west to the Town of Hearst in the east which amounts to 526,417.35 km² and a driving distance of approximately 1045km. To drive this distance is approximately the same distance from the Ontario border to Alberta border crossing two provinces. It is a vast geographical region that makes it more challenging to provide adequate services to residents.

NOMA would like to express our grave concerns regarding the critical shortage of paramedics experienced across our region. It is realized that a shortage of paramedics is a province-wide challenge but in comparison to more urban communities, Northwestern Ontario's efforts to recruit and retain paramedics are hampered by the rural and remote nature of the district, uncompetitive salaries and benefit packages and an inability to maintain work-life balance.

It is increasingly difficult to secure adequate health care staff to our region. To use Rainy River District as an example, they require 46 full-time Paramedics, but the service is currently operating with only 32 full-time Paramedics and at risk of losing more. In July 2024, an ambulance base located in Emo, the center of the Rainy River District where a gold mine, sawmill, seniors' homes, schools, and daycare facilities are all located, was temporarily closed due to a critical lack of paramedics. This is an unsustainable crisis situation, and it is an example that is seen throughout the Kenora and Thunder Bay Districts. The well-being of our paramedics is compromised, and our residents are at risk of not having access to life-saving ambulance services. When an ambulance base is shut down or not staffed adequately there is a domino effect region wide as limited resources are stretched in order to service the region.

To help solve the critical paramedic shortage in Northwestern Ontario and similar areas across the province, NOMA requests the Ministry of Health to consider the following actions:

1. Provide 100% Provincial Funding: Introduce targeted funding for rural, remote, and northern paramedic services. This will allow these regions to offer competitive salaries and benefits,

upgrade outdated equipment and bases, and invest in workplace health and safety programs. These steps will help attract and retain paramedics, especially where local municipalities can't increase tax revenues.

2: Launch a Targeted Recruitment Campaign: Initiate a province-wide recruitment campaign focused on promoting paramedic careers in rural and remote communities. Highlight the unique opportunities, financial incentives, and community benefits of working in areas like Rainy River District.

3: Collaborate with Colleges and Educational Institutions: Partner with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to support paramedic training programs that better reflect the need for an immediate increased workforce, increase second-career funding, and support services experiencing shortages with 100% provincial funding to increase the availability of bursaries or tuition waivers to students who commit to working in underserved areas post-graduation.

4. Create Work-While-Training Opportunities: Collaborate with the Ministry of Labour to develop apprenticeship or second-career programs for rural residents interested in paramedic careers. Provide financial assistance and on-the-job training, allowing them to work part-time while completing their education.

By implementing these measures, the Ministry of Health can provide rural paramedic services with the tools they need to deliver continuous, high-quality care across the province. NOMA implores the province to ensure equitable health care and paramedic services for the people of Northwestern Ontario.

Sincerely,



Wendy Landry, President, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association
Mayor, Municipality of Shuniah

Cc:

Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Honourable Minister Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Minister of Long-Term Care

Blair Hains, Chief of Staff, Minister of Health

Deborah Richardson, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health

Susan Picarello, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health, Emergency Health Services Division

Mayor Deb Ewald, Chair, District of Rainy River Services Board

MPP Greg Rickford, (Kenora – Rainy River)

MPP Kevin Holland (Thunder Bay - Atikokan)

MPP Lise Vaugeois (Thunder Bay - Superior North)

MP Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay - Superior North)

MP Marcus Powlowski – Thunder Bay-Rainy River

MP Eric Melillo – Kenora

All member municipalities CAOs and Clerks



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Please be advised that the municipal council for the Township of Conmee at its regular meeting held on October 22nd 2024 passed the following resolution:

RESOLUTION 2024-0213

Moved by Councillor Kresack

Seconded by Councillor Maxwell

BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the Township of Conmee supports the letter by NOMA regarding the critical shortage of paramedics in Northwestern Ontario

AND THAT copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario; Honourable Minister Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Minister of Long-Term Care; Honourable Minister Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health; Blair Hains, Chief of Staff, Minister of Health; Deborah Richardson, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health; Susan Picarello, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health, Emergency Health Services Division; Mayor Deb Ewald, Chair, District of Rainy River Services Board; Councillor Brian Hamilton, Chair, District of Thunder Bay Social Services Board; MPP Greg Rickford, (Kenora – Rainy River); MPP Kevin Holland (Thunder Bay - Atikokan); MPP Lise Vaugeois (Thunder Bay - Superior North); MP Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay - Superior North); MP Marcus Powlowski – Thunder Bay-Rainy River; MP Eric Melillo – Kenora; and NOMA

CARRIED

