

Urgent Message for: CUPE paramedic members

From: CUPE Ontario and CACO

March 2013

As you are aware, CUPE which represents the majority of paramedics licensed in Ontario along with other labour unions representing paramedics have for several years opposed the introduction of a regulatory college for paramedics.

In fact, CUPE has consistently opposed the introduction of regulatory colleges for members who are social workers and early childhood educators and recently for members in the skilled trades.

CUPE believes that these colleges are an unnecessary regulatory requirement that burden public sector workers like paramedics who have already acquired the certifications relevant to their job class, met the criteria required by employers and who are covered by provincial legislation, with additional oversight.

Employers often support these colleges because they provide them with additional mechanisms for discipline and censure of workers. EMS employers support the establishment of a Paramedic College.

It's unfortunate that the Ontario Paramedic Association (OPA) continues to ignore all the pit-falls associated with existing regulatory colleges and the disciplinary regimes imposed on teachers, nurses and social workers and aggressively pushes for a paramedic regulatory college.

It is disingenuous to present a regulatory college as self-regulation for paramedics as the OPA is doing on their website, when the exact opposite is the case. A primary function of the college model is to serve and protect the public's interest not the interests of paramedics who are dealing with systemic underfunding of EMS and employer decisions that affect their ability to save lives and do their jobs well.



The OPA has posted a new survey on its website in an effort to revive its lagging efforts to lobby the provincial government for, a new Paramedic Act and a private Paramedic College responsible for licensing and reprimanding paramedics for professional misconduct.

We believe there is bias in the OPA survey – as it is currently structured – in favour of the introduction of a new Act and regulatory college for paramedics. It also allows an individual paramedic to fill out the survey several times, thereby skewing the results' process.

CACO and CUPE Ontario are asking that if you choose to fill out the OPA survey that you say NO to a Paramedic College.

We encourage you to use some of the information provided in this urgent update and to access more information on CUPE's opposition to the college at: www.cupe.on.ca.

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Five reasons why paramedics who are members of CUPE should say NO to a regulatory college covering paramedics

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1. Regulatory colleges are not teaching colleges. Rather they set the criteria for professional certification and investigate complaints from the public and discipline college members regarding issues such as professional incompetence, professional misconduct, and sexual impropriety.
2. Certification under a college model often shifts the blame for systemic problems in the workplace to the individual worker and removes government accountability for policies and funding decisions that have direct bearing on issues, incidences and the investigation of a worker.
3. The disciplinary functions of regulatory colleges impose an additional and unnecessary level of oversight and discipline above what is already in place under employer policy, legislation and freely negotiated collective agreements.
4. Mandatory fees to a college pose a financial burden and create a barrier for workers who are required to pay fees out-of-pocket to maintain their license/certification to practice. In Alberta paramedics pay \$600 a year to the regulatory college.
5. Because colleges are designed to “protect the public”, workers who fall under a regulated profession or college model often pay out-of-pocket for malpractice insurance to protect themselves against liability.

CACO and CUPE Ontario are asking that if you choose to fill out the OPA survey that you say NO to a Paramedic College.

We encourage you to use the five reasons here as a guide. A fact sheet with more information is available at: www.cupe.on.ca.