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April 11, 2018

Attention: All Members, CUPE Local 873

Dear Members;

## **Re: Presumptive Mental Injury Legislation**

I am excited to inform you about the introduction of a presumptive clause for occupational stress related injuries, including post-traumatic stress disorder, announced at the BC Legislature today. When signed into law, this presumptive legislation will recognize for the first time in BC the challenges that paramedics, along with police and fire fighters, face doing their jobs every day, and the inherent mental health risks associated with the difficult work they do so well.

This is very welcome news for our paramedics and is something we have worked very hard to achieve. The enacting of this represents a significant milestone in the support of mental health for public safety officers by our government. We are confident that this legislation will improve the support paramedics receive when faced with mental health injuries as a result of their work, while breaking down some of the stigma and barriers in doing so.

Change like this does not happen without a collective effort and remarkable solidarity from a committed membership, so I would like to thank each and every one of you for your resolve to improve mental health for not only yourself, but for your professional colleagues and friends. I would also like to recognize Lindsay Kellosalmi (Chair of Critical Incident Stress), Robert Parkinson (Health and Wellness Director), Sophia Parkinson (Executive Political Liaison) and the rest of the union executive for their tireless effort and dedication in advocating for legislative changes to support our members.

Unfortunately, at this time, dispatchers and call-takers have not been included in the new legislation. It is and always has been our position that the work our paramedic and E-COMM dispatchers do exposes them to significant risks for operational stress injuries. They are the first first-responders, who every day must handle very difficult, often chaotic and traumatizing situations, in a calm and professional manner. While the work and exposure may not be exactly the same, we feel strongly that they should be covered by the same legislation as other first responders and public safety officers.

We have already been in discussion with the Government regarding our concerns and have made it clear that we will continue to advocate for their inclusion. Government has given me assurances that they recognize the similar risk to those working in the dispatch environment and there is a

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willingness to include them in the near future. Together, with the BCEHS, ECOMM and other unions, we will continue to strongly advocate for inclusion on behalf of our dispatchers and call-takers. As stated, this is a huge milestone for public safety officers; however, it is not the end of the changes needed to make our workplaces psychologically safe.

Sincerely,



Cameron Eby  
Provincial President  
Ambulance Paramedics & Emergency Dispatchers of BC  
CUPE Local 873

CE/sd/MoveUp

