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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Provincial Government Introduces New Legislation for Public Safety Personnel

Paramedics are excited about new presumptive clause recognizing stress related injuries.

VANCOUVER, B.C., April 11, 2018– The Ambulance Paramedics of British Columbia (APBC) are extremely grateful for new legislation announced in Victoria today by the Provincial Government. The Minister of Labour, Hon. Harry Bains, made the announcement today from the front lawn of the Parliament during a press event, and later tabled the legislation in the house. This will provide a stress related presumptive clause for public safety personnel in British Columbia. The clause will recognize stress related injuries in addition to post traumatic stress disorder.

“This is extremely welcome news for paramedics in British Columbia,” states Cameron Eby, Provincial President for the Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of BC, “our team has worked hard to gain this type of support for our members and other allied emergency agencies. We are extremely grateful that our government has recognized the significant mental health challenges faced by paramedics in our province and believe this legislation will provide relief to our front line prehospital medical care professionals.”

A study published in the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry reveals that public safety personnel (which includes paramedics, police, firefighters, dispatchers and correction officers) are four times more likely than the general population to screen positive for clinically significant symptoms consistent with one or more mental disorder(s). According to the study “paramedics report experiencing very high rates of exposure to human suffering for which they often feel responsible, potentiating substantial emotional stress” and have a higher incidence of positive screening than other public safety personnel.¹

Lindsay Kellosalmi, Chair of Critical Incident Stress Management with the Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of BC, is not surprised by the results of the study. She is all too familiar with the mental health challenges faced by both paramedics and dispatchers daily. “Paramedics and dispatchers are routinely exposed to unimaginable trauma and tragedy,” says Kellosalmi, “Both

¹ The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry Volume 63, Issue 1, Mental Disorder Symptoms among Public Safety Personnel in Canada, R. Nicholas Carleton et al., First published: 28 August 2017. Accessed at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743717723825>.

the Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of BC and British Columbia Emergency Health Services (BCHES) have worked very hard to improve the resources available to paramedics and dispatchers in our province.”

Bob Parkinson, Director of Health and Wellness with the Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of BC says, “The legislation passed by the government today gives our frontline professionals the support they need to stay mentally healthy. This is a remarkable milestone for mental health care in our province.”

Unfortunately, the legislation passed today does not extend to call-takers and dispatchers. However, both APBC and BCEHS plan to advocate for the future inclusion of these workers. “Dispatchers and call-takers are often the first person exposed to trauma and tragedy when they receive a 911 call. They are the first-first responders, who have to manage extremely challenging situations while remaining calm and professional. As such, we will continue to pursue their inclusion in the legislation introduced today to protect their mental health” says Eby.

About Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of BC:

Ambulance Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of British Columbia is the union organization that represents the 4,500+ Paramedics and Emergency Dispatchers of the province of British Columbia, Canada. Please visit www.apbc.ca and www.911bc.com for more information.

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