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## PARAMEDIC SERVICES WEEK MESSAGE

I'm Troy Clifford, president of Ambulance Paramedics of BC.

Each year in our province, there are approximately half-a-million calls to 9-1-1 that require ambulance dispatch.

May 24 to 30 marks Paramedic Services Week, an annual recognition of paramedics across Canada. This year's theme is **Pandemic: Paramedics on the Front Line**. We wish it were a different theme, but this is the world's reality right now, and we cannot ignore it or gloss over it.

During this pandemic, ambulance paramedics are playing an integral role on the front line. Being an ambulance paramedic is already one of the most stressful jobs in the world ... and now we face additional stressors that have been brought upon by the pandemic.

Our role means that we are often the first medical professionals to tend to COVID-related or suspected cases. In caring for our patients, we must suppress our own fears of exposure and transmission.

Also, government and public health officials have mandated that we put on protective gear now for **all** emergency calls. Putting on protective equipment takes time, which adds greater stress to our crews because it is our instinct to begin medical treatment immediately.

Since the start of COVID-19, there has been an exponential increase in ambulance paramedics seeking the use of mental health supports available to us. We are actively encouraging our members to seek timely support when they need it, in order to take care of themselves and prevent a cascade of personal and professional impacts.

We are grateful that the public has helped British Columbia keep this pandemic at controllable levels so far. And to that end, we must continue to Hold the Line on social distancing. BC's situation is better than most, but the risk is far from over ... so please continue to do your part and we will continue to do our part.

This week, please join me in honouring your ambulance paramedics, people who are dedicated to serving you in your greatest time of need. Our approximately 4,500 members include 9-1-1 medical dispatchers; paramedic crews on the ground; community paramedics; and our air ambulance teams who transfer adults and infants in critical condition.

We'd love to hear from you. Stay in touch with us on social media. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram & Facebook @APBC873.

Thank you for your continued support. Take care of yourselves and your families.

*Troy Clifford*

*Troy Clifford has been a paramedic for more than 30 years. As the president of the Ambulance Paramedics of BC and Emergency Dispatchers of BC, he represents 4,500 ambulance paramedics and dispatchers.*