

ONTARIO AWARD FOR PARAMEDIC
BRAVERY ACT, 2009 /
LOI DE 2009
SUR LE PRIX DE BRAVOURE
DES AUXILIAIRES MÉDICAUX
DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs. Van Bommel moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery / Projet de loi 136, Loi prévoyant le Prix de bravoure des auxiliaires médicaux de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Van Bommel, you have up to 12 minutes for your response, pursuant to standing order 98.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the second reading of Bill 136. I first introduced this last December.

Before I go further, I would like to first recognize Wayne and Clara Patterson, who are here with us in the members' gallery today. Wayne and Clara have been with me every step of the way in developing Bill 136. From the bill's inception back in 2007 to today, the Patterson family has been at the forefront of promoting the need to recognize the role of paramedics in today's emergency response and management environment.

Today is especially emotional and important for the Pattersons. Just under two years ago, on February 25, 2007, four months before his 31st birthday, their son, paramedic Paul Wayne Patterson, was fatally injured while on duty, responding to an emergency call.

Through Mr. and Mrs. Patterson's strength and encouragement, Bill 136 is intended to recognize our province's paramedics, who, by the very nature of their profession, often go beyond the call of duty to rescue and care for fellow citizens without consideration for their own safety.

February 25, 2007, was a stormy winter day in Chatham-Kent. The paramedics at Sun Parlour Emergency Services were busy responding to multiple emergency calls. Paul Patterson was attending an emergency medical call with two of his colleagues when another call was dispatched by the ambulance communications. The call involved a motor vehicle collision and Paul was ready to respond, together with his emergency response unit. En route to the call, Paul's emergency response vehicle left the icy, snow-covered road. Paul was killed. He died in the line of duty while serving the residents of Chatham-Kent and, by extension, the citizens of Ontario.

This was not the first incident in which Paul acted selflessly. Wayne and Clara supplied me with an array of media articles, letters of appreciation and award certificates. Paul received the Above and Beyond Award from Sun Parlour Emergency Services in 2005 after being involved in an attempt to save a farmer who had rolled his tractor and pesticide sprayer into the farm pond. Paul, along with a number of others, dove into the pond that had already been contaminated by

the pesticide sprayer. As the son of a farmer, Paul understood only too well the potential danger of the exposure to pesticides. Sadly, despite their efforts, they were unable to save the farmer.

I want again to take a moment to welcome a number of other guests who have come with the Pattersons to the Ontario Legislature today. I especially want to introduce Paul's twin sister and her husband, Andy and Laura Sanders. With them are a number of Ontario's paramedics who have travelled here and taken valuable time from their duties to be present for the debate and to show their support for this bill.

Bruce Krauter is also joining us today in the members' gallery. Bruce's involvement was invaluable during the promotion and the research process leading to today's second reading of the bill. Bruce is the operations manager at Sun Parlour Emergency Services and, together with the Pattersons, was instrumental in assisting me in both bringing the importance of the paramedic profession to the attention of the Legislature and, more importantly, bringing forward the need for provincial recognition of the selfless acts of service that so many paramedics provide, in what can be often very dangerous circumstances.

Back in May of 2007, Mr. Krauter wrote a letter to the members for Chatham-Kent and Essex, members Bruce Crozier and Pat Hoy, inquiring as to why there was not a provincial award for paramedic bravery. In his letter, Bruce writes, "Paramedics in our community serve the citizens of these communities as well as persons from across this province and visitors from abroad during any condition, time of day, harmful situation, landscape or duration."

These paramedics are put at risk every day, whether it's environmental, biological, acts of violence or while in transit to a call. In Bruce's over 25 years of service, he has known two paramedics who have died in the line of duty, and knows numerous others who have performed their duties above and beyond the call and put themselves at risk, all in an act to save someone's life.

Bruce wrote about the N.H. McNally Award, which recognizes bravery by pre-hospital professionals in the performance of their duties. This award is presented by the Emergency Medical Services peers, but it is not recognized either provincially or federally. An Ontario award for paramedic bravery is necessary in order to give paramedics in our province the recognition they deserve for their service to all Ontarians.

A paramedic in my riding, Tony Metayer, shared with me the procedures, the medications he can dispense on the scene and en route to hospital in Wallaceburg at the southwest corner of my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. He tells me paramedics can do everything from defibrillation to intravenous fluid therapy and advanced airway management. They are able to administer seven different drugs to treat conditions such as chest pain, heart attack, hypoglycemia, allergic reactions, breathing difficulties and severe nausea and vomiting.

1530

Paramedics also have oxygen that they can use in many different medical and trauma conditions. Depending on the circumstances, they have the ability to call for an air ambulance to respond at

the scene, along with the traditional land ambulance. Considering the wide range of patients that paramedics see every day, their skills as primary care providers have been very beneficial to the patients they treat. I'm sure their early intervention has saved many lives.

Over the 14 years Tony has worked as a paramedic, he has noticed that the scope of practice for paramedics has evolved significantly. The reality is that when an emergency arises, there is an expectation from the public that firefighters, police officers and paramedics will be there when they're needed most.

The role of paramedics is to respond to emergencies, provide medical service and transport patients to medical facilities. In many cases, the initial emergency care provided by paramedics could be the deciding factor between life and death, temporary or permanent disability, a brief hospital stay or prolonged hospitalization. When responding to emergencies, paramedics may not always be given prior knowledge of the extent of the issues that they will be exposed to. In a critical situation, paramedics often experience unexpected and shocking events for which most people would not be prepared. Paramedics very often are required to deliver their services in unregulated, uncontrolled, unpredictable and often hazardous environmental situations.

While identified with the health care community due to the medical scope of their practice, paramedics often serve alongside police and firefighters in attending at and dealing with emergency situations and settings. Paramedics must be prepared to respond to unfolding emergency settings beyond the medical situation to which they were initially responding. Paramedics will often be required to work within an emergency setting that includes other emergency services colleagues. Examples of calls to which paramedics would attend include working fires, assaults, car accidents, drug overdoses and alcohol abuse, to mention just a few.

In Canada, it is estimated that one paramedic a year dies in the line of duty, with 18 having lost their lives between 1995 and 2006. The occupational fatality rate for paramedics is similar to that of other emergency public workers, including police officers and firefighters. It has been 2,000 years since the good Samaritan stopped and tended to an injured stranger at the roadside. There is no record of the name of this helper, but his act of compassion will be with us for all time, a symbol for all who care for a stranger.

It is my intention that Ontario's current good Samaritans, the nearly 6,000 paramedics across the province, be recognized appropriately for events which compel them to act selflessly to rescue and care for another without giving consideration for their own safety. I'm looking forward to hearing from my colleagues on this very important matter in the House today and I ask for your support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm pleased to rise to support Bill 136 and my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to the paramedics who are visiting with us in the galleries today. I had a chance to meet with some of you during a reception at noon. One of the things they were able to perform was to take my vitals and tell me that my pulse ox,

my blood pressure and my resting heart rate are significantly lower and more healthy than those of several of my colleagues from the NDP. So I thank them for that.

This bill recognizes that paramedics perform a service that is essential to the health, the well-being and the safety of our society. I, like many here, have been on the receiving end of paramedical services. Particularly as my parents aged and grew more frail, I would arrive oftentimes to find paramedics attending to their needs. I can tell you, seeing the blue uniforms in attendance makes you worry an awful lot less.

Paramedics in Ontario are new, and I speak in relative terms. We used to watch television programs featuring paramedics that came from the United States 20 years ago, maybe a little more than that. Now it has become a routine service here in Ontario, dependable and very much depended upon. We offer young, motivated people, as Paul Wayne Patterson was, the opportunity to become paramedics through courses in our community colleges.

As the critic for citizenship and immigration for the official opposition, I have been privileged to witness the recognition of many citizens who have accomplished great things. In fact, I have had the pleasure of handing out some of these awards. We in Ontario recognize bravery of police officers and firefighters, but we have not yet extended that recognition to our paramedics. That is wrong. They are first responders equal to any others where life and death hang in the balance. Paramedics, like firefighters and police officers, join the profession recognizing that this is no 9 to 5 job. Their commitment extends beyond their shift. They don't pay attention to the clock. They are never really off duty. They certainly don't get snow days, like the icy one that claimed the life of the person in whose memory our colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has put forward her bill.

Paul Wayne Patterson's entire life was about helping others, and that life was cut short doing what he loved best. Paul was a paramedic on duty with Sun Parlour EMS in Chatham-Kent and, as we have heard, died on February 25, 2007, travelling to assist others.

We like to recognize service and contribution here in Ontario. We have a variety of awards, as I have mentioned before. We have the Order of Ontario, the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery, the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery, the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship and the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. I think we have room for one more. Police officers and firefighters will tell you that when someone in their profession dies in the line of duty, even though they may be thousands of miles away, they grieve the loss as one of their own. Paul Wayne Patterson's dedication was celebrated by paramedics and policemen and firefighters from across Ontario and well beyond, and rightly so. He and others earned and should earn an Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery. They do it every single day. So we need such an award; we need to create an award.

In correspondence from AMEMSO, the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario, I noticed the following relating to how much this kind of tribute means at several levels: "(a) to ... front-line paramedics, whose significant contribution to public health and safety is only beginning to be fully understood and appreciated; (b) to the many Ontarians who have benefited from not only the daily professional work of paramedics but have been impacted by the

acts they perform ' with no concern for personal safety'; and finally, (c) to the pioneers of this relatively new branch of public service whose vision and professionalism charted the course that has brought us here today."

In 2006, William Mann, a KAP paramedic, was on his way from Ottawa to PEI with his fiancée when they encountered heavy snowstorms that led to a deadly car pileup. After their car was repeatedly shaken by 38 or so collisions as car after car and tractor-trailer after trailer slammed into the pileup, having made sure that his fiancée was okay, Mr. Mann got out of his car in a blinding snow squall and proceeded to help other victims of this terrible crash.

Glen Gillies, executive secretary with the Toronto Paramedic Association and public relations director with the Ontario Paramedic Association, who is here today as well, stopped on the side of Highway 401 in Ajax on his way home to pull someone out of a burning car.

Back in March 2008, Patrick Chatelaine, also on his way home, pulled over on the 401 at the site of a car accident and, along with other paramedics, put out a fire and pulled people out of their cars, all before ambulances arrived.

A couple of years ago, Rob Johnstone and his partner rescued people from a burning housing unit because they arrived on the scene before the fire department.

Even in my own area of York region there are several examples. In December 1999, a car crashed into a pond at the Glenway golf club in Newmarket early in the morning. The vehicle, with two passengers, began to submerge in the water. York region EMS paramedics Mark Hinton, Ian Phythian and Shawn McLeish entered the water to attempt to rescue the male and female occupants of the vehicle. Both patients were transported to the hospital. The female succumbed to her injuries, but the male survived. In 2000, all three paramedics received bravery awards from Chief Fantino, along with York region police officers who participated in the rescue.

And in February 2008, just last year, Andrew Liski, York region EMS operations supervisor, attended a scene where two people were trapped in their vehicle following a collision. While paramedics were attending to their patients, Andrew observed live hydro wires unsecured above the scene. He ordered all responders away from the area right away. Seconds later the wires fell, setting the scene on fire.

1540

Andrew's quick actions demonstrated the strong relationship with his colleagues and other emergency services. Both EMS and fire responders realized what could have happened had Andrew not made such a knowledgeable decision. Without his leadership and courage, the outcome could have been much, much worse.

In 2008, York region EMS paramedic Andrew Liski was nominated for a Character Hero Award as part of the Character Community Awards for his concern for others. Wouldn't it be nice to give him the award that my colleague Mrs. Van Bommel is recommending?

These are acts that we all believe we would undertake if conditions arose requiring to us do so, but the people I have cited-and certainly Paul Wayne Patterson-made careers and led their lives not just thinking about that but doing so every single day.

These paramedics received federal citations or recognition from their own associations and departments, as well they should have. They deserve recognition from their provincial government as well.

I would like to thank the Patterson family for Paul, as well as all the paramedics with us here today for your service to the people of Ontario. It's about time that your dedication to our province is recognized. I commend my colleague for bringing forth this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To begin, I'd like to say to my good friend from Thornhill that I didn't have my vital signs measured at the lunch-although I did drop in-and had I, they would be exemplary, so thank you.

I want to begin by saying that everyone in the New Democratic Party speaks with one voice in saying that we're supportive, of course, of this bill. Certainly, this should have been in place long ago.

To the Pattersons, our prayers, our thoughts are with you. You are brave indeed to come down here, and you are brave indeed to endorse this measure and to commemorate, in a living way, what your son's bravery accomplished. Thank you very much for being with us. I know it's tough.

Paramedics are a core feature of our emergency measures services. When you phone 911, they're usually among the very first to arrive at the scene. In my prior life, I was a minister at a United Church and we ran a dinner service, close to St. Joe's, for those who had mental health and addiction issues. I can tell you that many times we would have people who would have seizures etc. We got to know our paramedics quite well at that church.

I believe your service sometimes goes unrewarded by the thank-yous that we all owe you. Hopefully, today, you're going to hear from us what you should be hearing from the entire province of Ontario, which is one big thank-you. This award will go a long way toward accomplishing that.

I had some paramedics come to see me in my riding about another issue that paramedics face-actually, a couple of other issues that paramedics face-that I really wish we would act on as well as this. Number one, all of our front-line workers-police, firefighters and paramedics-are aware that their jobs can be sometimes akin to warfare. They came and told me about this situation where they went to help somebody who was in a knife fight; they just happened to be on the scene. There were knife wounds involved. They pulled people apart-with great danger to themselves because one of these people was high on crack and wielding a knife-only to be

jumped, literally, by bystanders. One of the paramedics was beaten up after that. This is a true incident that happened in our city. I was astounded by this.

This same paramedic went on to experience post-traumatic stress symptoms. Post-traumatic stress disorder-PTSD, as it's called-is a real problem among paramedics and all front-line workers, firefighters and police. Among those who sit on the Workmen's Compensation Board, now called the WSIB, there is real concern for those cases as well. We need presumed diagnosis in this province around that kind of disability, as well as others, in the same way that we have, in this House, passed presumed-diagnosis legislation for certain varieties of cancer for firefighters. We need that same kind of legislation to cover paramedics as well. That's something that came out of my office last fall. We had a press conference around this, and brought it forward. We would love to see that bill go forward. It will be tabled shortly.

Another problem these paramedics brought to my attention was significant offload delays. This is the time it takes to get patients from the ambulance into the hospital. These delays are being caused by resource constraints in our hospitals; in short, staffing shortages. In other words, patients are waiting in ambulances. Some delays are 30 minutes; others are many hours. This strains our EMS, it strains our paramedics and it obviously has tremendous impacts on the patients they serve as well.

We're looking at unprecedented hospital cutbacks in the future of this province. We're looking at a situation where many hospitals will not be able to balance their budgets, which they're required to do by law. We need health care funding in this province to make that situation better and, in turn, make the lives of our paramedics better, because they know this is profoundly stressful for those they deal with, for the staff in the hospitals as well for themselves. Those are other areas we need to look at soon.

Certainly, for those who sit in the majority in the government, I would urge that this bill absolutely be passed speedily, but also that we look at the working lives of paramedics in other ways: what they go through, what happens if they have a disability, what happens at WSIB, and particularly post-traumatic stress disorder, where they can be retraumatized just trying to get coverage for something that definitely happened because of their work. And certainly we need to look at those offload delay times and the waits in emergency rooms, which are a plague across our province and which really need to be addressed. That's another area we need to look at as well.

I want to say again, thank you from everyone who has ever worked in a situation like I did in the ministry, anyone who has ever worked in a hospital situation where they come in contact with you often-probably every day-and anyone who works with the public and knows what that's like. Quite frankly, even MPPs know what that's like. We know that it's not always joyous, it's not always easy, and it sometimes is extremely difficult and very often thankless. Certainly Bill 136 will award someone. I would like to see this extended to award everyone in the paramedic community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to start with a letter written by Paul Charbonneau, president of AMEMSO, the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario. I'm going to read a portion of this letter into the record:

"Although AMEMSO sees all members of protective services as everyday heroes, paramedics deserve their rightful consideration for the courageous acts contemplated by this award. The establishment of this award verifies an awareness by our elected officials (and hence our citizens) that their pre-hospital care needs are well placed and held in the highest regard.

"Again, we thank Ms. Maria Van Bommel, MPP, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, for sponsoring this private member's bill and sincerely urge all members of provincial Parliament to support it.

"Thank you for the opportunity to provide the AMEMSO perspective.

"Yours very truly,

"Paul Charbonneau

"President."

I want to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex-I usually flip those around; I apologize-for the opportunity, because she is aware of the work I have been doing with firefighters, paramedics and police officers over the years, to bring attention to the fact that this particular group of people does something very few of us do and would want to do; that is, put ourselves in the line of trouble. The natural aversion of the human condition is to leave it. The special gift they have to face that is what we're recognizing today. So I want to thank the member very sincerely for allowing me to say a few words.

I also want to express to you that it's very important for us to acknowledge that the families of these individuals deserve our utmost respect and thanks, because I consider it-I've said this in the past-a large thank-you for the gift of those people. Husbands, wives, spouses, children, grandparents, parents: They know every single day that their loved one is doing a job that they might not return to. We are talking about that today because we have in our presence some wonderful people who offered us that gift. So I want to thank them personally, that each and every day they go to work and they provide us with that very unique and very special gift that they have to put themselves in the line of harm.

1550

I want to thank all of the paramedics in Ontario. I also want to thank personally Charles Longeway-a friend of mine-and Randy Papple, who run the County of Brant Ambulance Service, and the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services for providing support for this bill.

In establishing this award for bravery, we will be able to record and immortalize the paramedics who perform exceptional acts of bravery and to show our appreciation and gratitude to the

paramedics and their families that we take so much as a gift. We want to say, in a small way, "Thank you." The bill is important to those who are required to perform these daily acts of courage and bravery and to help their fellow human beings.

Another point that's important to make is that these people don't do this for that purpose. The more I got to learn about who they were, the less they thought it was important. The value that we're adding to this today is an acknowledgment from us to them. They're not looking for it. What they want to know is simply, do we appreciate what they do? This is our opportunity to do that. They don't want to be heroes; they don't want to be seen as heroes. They want to be seen as people who do their job. They take pride in their job and they do it well. That gift is their gift to us. So we're simply saying: "Thank you for the gift of you."

It also serves to go a long way to educate the younger generations on how important these acts of selflessness and caring are and to help them understand and feel the significance of such acts. They are wonderful role models. They go to schools, they go to churches, they go to the basements in those little halls, and they perform lessons free. They tell people of who they are and what they do. They educate. They are great role models for kids to see that these types of acts of selflessness are part of the human condition and make us attached to each other. So I want to give to them a special thank-you for that small gift that they give while they perform their actual job.

If the bill passes, it will honour the services upheld by the paramedics off duty in exceptional acts of service. However, we wish to recognize the contribution that paramedics have made to society while performing their duties, and even, on occasion, to recognize their ultimate sacrifice in the loss of their life. There is no more noteworthy act, such as that of Glen Arnold, the paramedic for the Canadian Armed Forces in Petawawa, or Josh Klukie, the Canadian soldier and paramedic from Thunder Bay, who were killed serving in Afghanistan. And of course, as we've heard before, to Paul Patterson and his entire family, thank you for that gift.

However, death is not the only reason we have to concern ourselves with celebrating this particular bill and, if passed, this award. Paramedics in emergency services are front-line performers. They get in front of the trouble, which means they expose themselves to many risks that we have to include in our society today: biological, chemical, radioactive, AIDS, hepatitis—you name it, they are exposing themselves to it all the time. That is something we should celebrate, the fact that they are willing to do that for us.

I've got about another 25 pages for this speech. I want to make it clear to you that it isn't about writing a speech; it's about making sure that we stand together, unified, as we're hearing with all sides of the House, and that we celebrate our paramedics.

To you, looking you in your eyes: God bless you, and thank you very much for what you do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Listening to the debate today, it reminded me of the first time in my life, I think, that I saw an ambulance. I was coming home from school. It was apple-picking time. I

must have been maybe six or seven. Somebody had fallen off a ladder in the orchard and they were lying on the ground and complaining about a very sore back. Our house was the closest house with a telephone, and we phoned an ambulance. I can remember the ambulance coming up our road. It was a dirt road in those days; it's Tomkin Road in Mississauga today, but it was a dirt road then. I can still remember the ambulance. It was white. It was a Cadillac; it was one of those antiques that you see in the 1950s. One driver came out and lifted the injured person onto a board and a couple of other fellows helped carry him over to the ambulance and off he went. Unfortunately, that gentleman passed away sometime later, and that would not happen today. It would not happen today with the EMS workers and paramedics. That man would be alive. So it's the kind of improvement to our lifestyle that we thank you for today.

The purposes of awards, of course, are for extraordinary bravery, and paramedics are indeed a very important part of our medical system. They place themselves at peril for the benefit of others and that's a very noble calling indeed.

In my riding of Halton, we have emergency medical services that operate, of course, 24 hours, seven days a week. It's something that people maybe don't think about all the time. In Halton they operate out of 11 stations in Oakville, Burlington, Milton, Georgetown and Acton. This I found very interesting: There are 150 paramedics who serve 450,000 Haltonians and they get over 50,000 calls per year-that's 150 paramedics who respond to that. The paramedics also work closely with the Halton Regional Police Service tactical rescue unit; that also includes a bicycle medical patrol so they can get to areas that an ambulance may not be able to get to very easily.

I used to live fairly close to the Kelso Conservation Area, where there are a couple of rock climbing places. People seem to enjoy climbing up the face of the rock wall on the escarpment that is perhaps 100 to 150 feet high. On a nice, warm day in the summertime you could count on at least one ambulance heading into Kelso, and more often than not it was a rock climber who was either stuck on the face and had to be rescued or he was stuck in a tree into which he fell-he was a lucky one-or he had to be scraped off the ground; most of them just injured badly. I don't ever recall a death in that. It certainly wasn't very pleasant duty for paramedics, but they did it and they did it often in that area.

I'm not sure why it is allowed to take place-rock climbing, that is-but I'm sure the participants of rock climbing find it very exciting. They should have a safety harness on but many of them don't. The paramedics, of course, do their job and rescue these people who have put themselves in harm's way.

As a society, it's a wonderful thing to have people who put themselves in harm's way to help others regardless of how they got there. So we thank you very much for what you do in your life. I look forward to this bill passing and there being an award for bravery in going beyond the call of duty for paramedics in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Along with other New Democrats, I want to say I'm very pleased and very honoured to be able to stand in support of Bill 136 and, as with my colleagues in this House,

urge its quick passage. Currently, as has probably been said, there are provincial awards for firefighters and police officers, there's a federal government award for paramedics called the Exemplary Service Medal for EMS professionals, but there's no provincial award for paramedics.

Ontarians, through personal experience, know the contribution that paramedics make. They put their lives at risk, as has been said. They're at risk of contracting or being exposed to dangerous diseases, at risk of exposure to dangerous chemicals and, I would say, at times go into situations that are themselves directly dangerous.

I had the opportunity in the last federal election to canvass with a candidate who had previously been a paramedic and it was interesting, as we were going through some apartment buildings, some of which were rougher than others. He said, "When I used to knock on the door, I'd stand aside and not stand right in front of the door," and I thought, " Yeah, now there's an interesting perspective on delivery of service in the public sector." That isn't the way most people think of paramedics and the sorts of dangers they encounter, but that is simply the reality. That is what they go into, and they go into it with a dedication; they go into it with a knowledge of the risks that they're taking on, making the contribution that they do make.

1600

We all know that when you dial 911, you get the firefighters, you get the police, the paramedics. They all come into the same situation, facing similar perils, and it makes sense that they should be recognized in a similar way.

In her explanatory note in the act, Mrs. Van Bommel's bill talks about Paul Patterson. Mr. Patterson, a Chatham-Kent paramedic, was killed when his vehicle rolled over in response to a call.

We shouldn't forget the simple reality that people do put their lives at risk when they do this work. They do it to save our lives; they risk theirs.

There's widespread support for this bill. You can hear it throughout this House. Beyond this, AMEMSO, the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario, has made a statement: "The establishment of this award verifies an awareness by our elected officials and hence our citizens that their pre-hospital care needs are well placed and held in the highest regard." OPSEU, which represents many EMS workers, has voiced their support for this bill. Other supporters include: Thames EMS, Middlesex and Elgin; Essex-Windsor EMS; Lennox and Addington EMS; region of Waterloo; Ontario EMS chiefs' association; county of Frontenac.

This bill is a good piece of work. I have to say that the member has previously brought in very practical private members' bills that I was pleased to support, and I'm very pleased today to support this bill as well.

To those who are here representing emergency measures paramedics, I want to say personally that I thank you for all that you've done, and I hope that this bill helps, in part, in recognizing all that you've contributed to our society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I again want to join my colleagues in acknowledging the effort undertaken by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Undertaking these private member's bills—there are many that come to our offices and our constituencies, and we all know the effort that's required to undertake this kind of initiative. For her to do this is very much appreciated. It is something that she has undertaken and has brought to this House's attention, and it's something that obviously seems to have support. I think that the work beyond the private members' hour has to continue. I just wish her the best of luck in pursuing this, to make people aware of the contributions that paramedics make.

As we all have been aware, these are the first responders, sometimes underestimated or underappreciated, and I think that's sometimes just because we don't take time to evaluate what they've done and what they do. I know the situation sometimes in rural Ontario, but I can imagine the role of paramedics in urban Ontario or downtown Toronto. I see some incredible risks taken by paramedics trying to get through traffic in rush hour. They must risk their life 20 times in one call, trying to avoid traffic gridlock and get through lights and turns and trucks, and they're doing this most often in speed to save a life. I guess if you counted the number of lives they have saved, the number of people who have been diverted from long-term illnesses because the paramedics got there in time—and I know those thresholds, and for them the 30-second thresholds are critical.

I was very impressed a couple of years ago when I had the pleasure to work with Garrie Wright from Toronto EMS services. I worked with Garrie on trying to bring the AEDs, automated external defibrillators, into public places and to educate people on the value of having AEDs, the portable heart defibrillators, in hockey arenas, in this building. We finally, with Garrie's help, got one in this building. It took two years to get one in this building. With Garrie's passion, we went around the province trying to get people to support these heart-saving devices that are now becoming more and more commonplace. This is the work of an EMS professional, Garrie Wright, who is still doing good work with the city of Toronto.

Anyway, I was very impressed with the passion and the professionalism of paramedics in getting to know a lot of them with the portable heart defibrillators. It was a private member's bill that got introduced about seven or eight years ago, which eventually was passed, and now we have a program in Ontario where AEDs are going into public buildings. In fact, we should ensure, wherever we are in our ridings, that there are AEDs in our community centres. They should be in our schools, they should be in our workplaces, because that is a linkage between the paramedic and the life-saving 30 seconds that could be critical in saving someone who is suffering from cardiac arrest. I know the AEDs have already saved over a dozen lives at the Woodbine racetrack. At the Toronto international airport, they've saved a number of lives already, not to mention in hockey arenas.

The paramedics deserve this recognition, and I think it's incumbent upon us as MPPs to let our government and our fellow colleagues know that this is something that should go forward. It's something that recognizes their risk and achievement and the security they give people across Ontario.

Maybe sometimes we take these essential services for granted. They are always there, and that's why sometimes we don't appreciate what it takes to get to the spot. Then, as someone mentioned before-I think the member for Toronto-Danforth mentioned it-when you go to a door, you don't know what you're going to find inside that door, inside that apartment or house, whether the person has some contagious disease, whether that person is violent. The person could be armed. There are all kinds of risks that take place. So it is not an automatic phone call and you just turn on the paramedic. There are all kinds of variables there that they have to deal with, and that is why they have to have the greatest professional expertise. They have to be beyond professional. They have to be passionate, and that's what I found about most paramedics I've met: They really love their work, and they are willing to risk their lives for others who are in danger. If they don't deserve a medal, I don't know who does deserve one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Van Bommel, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the members for Thornhill, Parkdale-High Park, Brant, Halton, Toronto-Danforth and Eglinton-Lawrence for their supportive words. I also want to mention that we had a letter from Paul Charbonneau, who is with us here today. I've also received a number of e-mails and phone calls of support from emergency medical services, police services, fire services, individual paramedics, their families and friends.

I want to just read one from James Kang, who is the director of Halton region EMS. He writes: "I have reviewed Bill 136 and am in full support of recognizing those paramedics who have lost their lives or put themselves in danger while providing pre-hospital patient care to those in need.... Bill 136 ... is long overdue."

I want to also talk about the fact that Paul Patterson paid the ultimate price. Paul was a hero, but first of all, he was a paramedic and he placed the lives of others ahead of his own. He was a dedicated paramedic who garnered the respect of his colleagues as an exemplary individual. Paul is one of many paramedics, including my own nephew, Jeff Millar, a paramedic in the Renfrew region, who goes above and beyond the call to serve the public.

I want to just take a moment to thank those who have done the legwork to bring this bill to fruition: the Patterson family and Bruce Krauter; James Berry in my Toronto office, who led the charge and was joined recently by Rachele MacDougall; Tracey Dorman and Marie Baker in my constituency office; and Chris Wernham of legislative counsel, who scripted the legislation proper.

Before I finish, I want to just read the prayer of the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario, with your permission, Speaker:

God grant me the strength to deliver emergency medical care,

With skillful hands and a compassionate heart.

Give me the courage and ability to render my professional skills,

When called upon and lives are on the line.

Help to guide these hands with love and care as I bring new life into this world.

Let me ease the suffering of others from day to day.

And finally, to help me accept my fate and the fate of others,

With a clear mind and an open heart.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY ACT, 2009 /
LOI DE 2009 SUR LE JOUR
DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 67, standing in the name of Mr. Klees.

Mr. Klees has moved second reading Bill 25, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Frank Klees: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly? So ordered.

CURRICULUM

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 68, or private member's notice of motion number 76, standing in the name of Mr. Kwinter. Is it the pleasure of the House that that motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ONTARIO AWARD FOR PARAMEDIC
BRAVERY ACT, 2009 /
LOI DE 2009
SUR LE PRIX DE BRAVOURE
DES AUXILIAIRES MÉDICAUX
DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Van Bommel has moved second reading of Bill 136, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I would ask that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed. So ordered.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday next at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1613.