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Ontario Paramedic Association Reacts to Ontario Budget 2019

Toronto (April 11, 2019) - The Ontario Paramedic Association (OPA), is applauding the Government of Ontario for a budget that maintains its commitment to paramedics as critical emergency responders in Ontario's world class healthcare system. Budget 2019 reaffirms the provincial government's efforts to protect paramedic mental health, streamline ambulance dispatching and expand alternate destinations for paramedics.

Budget 2019 also represents a \$1.4 billion increase in Ontario's overall healthcare budget. Paramedics work with vulnerable populations like seniors, those with disabilities, mental health and addiction patients. The OPA appreciates critical funding flowing to new hospital beds, new long term care beds, acute mental health inpatient beds, community paramedicine, addiction services, and most important: surge funding. While this increased funding isn't directly earmarked for paramedics, the OPA is encouraged by the government's determination to end hallway healthcare and put Ontario patients at the forefront of policy decision-making.

OPA President Darryl Wilton noted, *"Ontario paramedics serve more than 1.1 million patients every year. By investing in measures to end hallway healthcare this will indirectly free-up paramedics to provide life-saving emergency services to Ontarians. Every paramedic crew stuck in offload delay in overcrowded hospitals, means fewer highly-trained paramedics to respond to medical and trauma emergencies in our communities."*

The OPA recognizes that this budget focuses on returning the province's books to balance and making healthcare delivery more efficient with the creation of Ontario Health and streamlining Ontario's health units. The OPA is cautiously optimistic that the measures announced in the 2019 Ontario Budget will not impede the high standard of care that paramedics are providing every day. Wilton added, *"The Ontario Paramedic Association has always been clear that paramedics play a critical role in Ontario's world-class healthcare system. Any efforts to make healthcare more efficient, must maintain front-line services and continue upholding the high level of care that Ontarians have come to expect."*

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