

November 12, 2025

SENT VIA EMAIL

Mr. John Collin
City Manager, City of Thunder Bay
john.collin@thunderbay.ca

Dear Mr. Collin,

RE: Superior North EMS District Paramedics – Negotiations and Staffing Crisis

I am writing on behalf of Unifor to express our deep concern regarding the state of negotiations for the Superior North EMS District Unit and to urge the City of Thunder Bay to deliver a renewed mandate that will allow a fair and responsible settlement to be reached before the November 26 strike deadline.

The collective agreement for this group expired over a year ago, on October 31, 2024. Since then, the bargaining committee for Unifor Local 229 has met with the City numerous times—including sessions in December, January, April, June, and October—without a resolution.

Conciliation was held in June, and the union requested a no board report in October. Despite the union's openness to meet again on November 25, progress has stalled. The Superior North EMS District Unit provides vital emergency services to indigenous communities, remote and rural communities across Northern Ontario.

These paramedics face unique and severe challenges in their work: long travel distances, 12-hour shifts followed by 12 hours on call, and frequent redeployments far from home bases. Paramedics travel into communities hundreds of kilometres from home to work and live in the EMS bases. Chronic understaffing has left bases closed, calls unanswered, and paramedics burnt out. Recruitment and retention are in crisis. The employer has numerous part time and full-time vacancies that are being left unfilled, six permanent vacancies required to create a 24-hour base, and two community paramedicine positions unfilled since 2023.

The City administration's current approach—relying on overtime and temporary bonuses—has failed to stem the loss of experienced medics. In the last year alone, more paramedics have left the district than have been recruited, and the City paid over \$1.35 million in overtime.

This is not sustainable. What is required is a meaningful wage adjustment or classification review that reflects the realities of providing emergency care across 13 remote stations.

Historically, the City and District units have patterned settlements. However, the District's current circumstances demand a departure from that pattern. Without targeted measures to address the unique recruitment and retention challenges in the north, service levels will continue to deteriorate, and patient safety will remain at risk. Unifor urges the City of Thunder Bay to return to the table with a mandate that acknowledges these realities and allows for an equitable agreement.

Paramedics in Superior North EMS deserve more than temporary fixes—they deserve fair compensation, respect, and a safe, sustainable workplace.

Our members are committed to their communities. We now ask that the City demonstrate the same commitment by working with us toward a fair settlement before November 26.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lana Payne", written in a cursive style.

Lana Payne
National President

/klcope343