

PCanadian Paramedicine



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TPA PATCH

Brian Annett

Welcome again from the TPA. We have been busy with lots of events over the summer. Toronto was host to this year's World Pride festival and Toronto EMS, with the members of the Toronto Paramedic Association, was able to participate in the event with not only medical coverage of the parade itself but also marching along the parade route. It was estimated that two million people from around the world were involved in this year's week-long festival. Twelve thousand people marched in the parade and about 285 floats made their way through the streets of Toronto.

This year marked the 70th anniversary of the "D-Day" invasion. Toronto EMS and TPA members were asked to aid in the commemoration ceremony. Don Meikle, was one of the members who participated, shares his story.

"Between June 1st and June 10th, myself and 10 other members of our Toronto EMS team had the honour and privilege of helping to escort over 100 veterans and their family members to Normandy, France to take part in the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings. Toronto EMS became involved after being approached by staff from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) who were looking to enhance their on-site medical capabilities. In the past, veterans traveling to these events only had the support of a doctor and one or two nurses who were not necessarily traveling with them to the events.

TEMS was selected for their historically strong ties with both VAC and the Department of National Defence. TEMS has been an active participant in programs such as skills maintenance for Canadian Forces combat medics as well as providing medical support and honour guards for the repatriation ceremonies of our fallen comrades in Afghanistan. Toronto is also home to Sunnybrook's K-Wing, the nation's most comprehensive long term care facility for veterans. Our honorary chief, Maj. Gen. Richard Rohmer is also a veteran of the Normandy campaign himself.

While in France, our team had the opportunity to visit Juno beach, the Canadian military cemeteries at Bény-Sur-Mer and Bretteville-Sur-Laize and to attend the international ceremony at Sword beach near Ouistreham. Most importantly we had the chance to spend 10 days getting to know some truly remarkable people. For many veterans, this was their first time returning to France since the war. Having the opportunity to hear their stories, and to see the country through their eyes was an experience we will never forget.

Though at times taxing, this trip was operationally a complete success. The majority of our day to day tasks consisted of assistance with ADLs and mobility as well as ensuring everyone stayed hydrated. We had several interactions with local paramedics mostly for minor complaints and recognition should be given to the men and women of the Sapeur-Pompier and SAMU who provided coverage to all of the above mentioned events. Ultimately three of our party ended up in hospital for further assessment and observation. Sadly, upon our return to Canada we learned that one of the Veteran's we cared for while in Normandy succumbed to complications for an underlying condition and passed peacefully at the hospital in Caen with family at his side. We only knew this Canadian Hero for a short time, but he will be missed and we are all better for having met him.

I am quite happy to report that our presence on this trip was well received by all parties. The veterans and their families greatly appreciated having ready access to any assistance they required and Veterans Affairs is looking at starting negotiations to have paramedic coverage at future events.

Please join me in recognizing the rest of my team members. Without their commitment and dedication this trip would not have been the success and amazing experience it was.

Ric Rangel-Bron, Jennifer Shields, Steve Henderson, Ken Cole, Debbie Wicks, Mike Wionzek, Kelly Burton, John Mason, Shawn Staff and Lisa Muzzin. I would also like to thank John Klich, John Belair and Greg Carter for their logistical and transportation support as well as all the others behind the scenes who helped make this possible".



Rachel Janer, Vice President of the TPA was able to attend an important conference. She wrote of her experience:

"When I joined Toronto EMS in 2003, my hire was apparently the first to have more women than men in its intake. I thought that that was a pretty significant point in TEMS' history. So, when I read that Ottawa Paramedic Service was hosting a Paramedic Women's Community Conference, I felt that it was a very important event to participate in since it was the first of its kind. Not only was it great to see former TEMS colleagues be a part of this inaugural day, but it was great to meet new friends and fellow paramedics from other services.

A paramedic named Tracy Levesque thought up the idea and developed a team of volunteers who were like-minded. In eight months, they gathered support from their General Manager of Emergency and Protective Services Sue Jones, Chief Anthony DiMonte, Local 999, and PPAO President Darryl Wilton. Fundraisers were held to make the swag, refreshments, and an amazing agenda come to life. Unexpected treats like a candy table, a vendor who sells pink work boots, and a speaker who brought tears to our eyes made the day very unique.

Many female speakers who have leadership roles in our profession from on the road and off the road, shared their stories about the evolution of women's roles in paramedicine. Also, key female pioneers from other professions and businesses spoke about making their marks in areas that were formerly considered a man's territory. Most importantly, it was the participants who danced in the morning and then again in the afternoon, who provided the energy that made this conference a great success. It is events like these that inspire growth and pride in the work that we do. I am truly grateful to have been part of the experience".

