

OPEN LETTER TO KAWARTHA LAKES CITY COUNCIL

Dear City Council Members,

We are writing to express our concern about the public safety implications of the recent decision to contract out more road maintenance work in the City of Kawartha Lakes for the upcoming winter.

As you know, Kawartha Lakes residents, visitors and businesses rely on us – the EMS workers, the firefighters, the school board workers and the postal workers – for a number of crucial services. With recent winters proving to be anything but predictable, ensuring that our roads are plowed properly and in a timely manner is without a doubt one of the most important factors affecting our work.

While we recognize that balancing city budgets is not an easy task, we urge you to take a closer look at publicly-delivered options. This decision, made without any public consultation, has the potential to put at risk the safety of our residents and we believe that keeping control of this service will prove better for our community.

The mounting evidence against privatizing winter road maintenance should speak for itself:

- Glen Murray, Minister of Transport in the last government, admitted that winter road maintenance in Ontario was substandard this past winter and awarded part of the blame to specific private contractors.
- Ontario's Auditor General has called a review – due before the end of 2014 – examining the Ministry of Transport's winter maintenance program and the contracts negotiated by the Ministry with contractors across the province.
- Manitoba's Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation decided against privatizing the delivery of public highway maintenance, concluding that while it initially lowers costs, it ultimately proves to be more expensive than public delivery.

We enjoy a good quality of life in the City of Kawartha Lakes thanks to public services. We know we can count on public services to be accountable, accessible, locally-controlled and a wise investment of tax dollars. Privatization undermines these community values. Contracting out is risky and expensive for municipalities and citizens. Costs rise, quality suffers and local control is weakened. Services are less accessible, and public funds are diverted from core services to corporate profits.

There is a better way.

We, the undersigned, urge City Council to reverse the decision to contract out more road maintenance work and to ensure that we keep this service in public hands so that all Kawartha Lakes citizens can continue to rely on safe infrastructure.

Lynn Raback, president of the local union representing school board support workers (CUPE 997)

Cheryl MacMillan, president of the local union representing mail carriers and postal workers (CUPW 564)

Charles Philips, vice-president of the local union representing EMS workers (OPSEU 371)

Tim Brasier, president of the local union representing firefighters (Kawartha Lakes Professional Firefighters)