

Thanks, but ...

An open letter to David Peterson, Chair of the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games Organizing Committee (TO2015)

I want to take this opportunity to thank you, the staff and the volunteers who, together, contributed to the success of the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games.

I had the opportunity to volunteer during the games as a St. John Ambulance Medical First Responder. Being a First Aider during the games entailed many long days but was worth every minute. It was an adventure well worth being part of. The excitement of the games was contagious and, as a volunteer, I was well rewarded for my efforts with memories that I will carry with me for years to come.

St. John Ambulance provided first aid coverage to the spectators at every event during both the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games. Collectively, St. John Ambulance contributed over 47,000 hours. As a charitable organization, St. John Ambulance does not charge for its services, instead accepting a donation from the event organizer.

St. John Ambulance received a donation from the TORONTO 2015 Organizing Committee of \$35,000. That works out to less than \$0.75 per hour for its services and only just covered the direct operating costs of the vehicles St. John Ambulance employed during the games. For a commercial operator to provide a similar level of service would have cost Pan Am anywhere from \$500,000 to \$750,000.

St. John Ambulance is a not-for-profit charitable organization whose volunteers contribute over half a million volunteer hours in Ontario each year. It relies on donations to offset the cost to provide first aid coverage at community events. Those include direct costs such as fuel and maintenance of its vehicles as well as medical supplies used. In addition to direct costs are the costs to train its volunteers, purchase equipment such as stretchers, Automated External Defibrillators and to replace vehicles. Other overhead includes office space, insurance and utilities.

The TORONTO 2015 Games does not owe me anything. I was a volunteer and received reward enough being a part of the Games.

Who TORONTO 2015 owes a debt to are the organizers of all the community events who, in exchange for first aid coverage, provide a donation that contributes to the long term sustainability of St. John Ambulance. To all the fall fairs, community celebrations, parades and sporting events who find value in St. John Ambulance's services and want to ensure that they remain viable. Every person who has paid to attend a community event; every volunteer who has donated their time to a fundraiser with full knowledge that a portion of the receipts have gone to ensure the safety of participants: These are the people that TORONTO 2015 Games owes an apology to.

TORONTO 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games by all means needs to be fiscally responsible, just not necessarily on the back of charities such as St. John Ambulance.

These are my personal views and opinion and do not necessarily reflect those of St. John Ambulance, the Priory Council or the Council for Ontario.

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