

Ontario
Provincial
Police

Police
provinciale
de l'Ontario



North Bay Detachment (Powassan/Mattawa)
North East Region **Région Nord Est**

867 Gormanville Road
North Bay, ON P1B 8G3

867 Rue Gormanville
North Bay, ON P1B 8G3

Telephone/Téléphone:
Facsimile/Télécopieur:

(705) 495-3878
(705) 495-3879

File number/Référence:

GOV-CSC

Date: October 9, 2025

LETTER OF COMMENDATION

Re: Exceptional Courage, Teamwork, and Professionalism During Severe Weather Response — Samuel de Champlain & Kiosk Provincial Park Incidents

On June 21st, 2025, during the late evening hours, an extreme weather event struck the Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park area. This fast-moving and violent storm caused the widespread downfall of trees, trapping multiple park visitors within their trailers, inflicting injuries, and inflicting significant structural and environmental damage throughout the park. As the storm progressed, floodwaters rose rapidly, creating dangerous and unstable conditions and significantly impeding access to emergency responders. The combined threat of downed trees, heavy rainfall, flooding, and darkness posed a grave risk to both park occupants and first responders attempting to enter the area.

From the earliest moments of the incident, local fire and medical personnel played a critical role in stabilizing the scene. Calvin Fire Department, Mattawa Fire Department, Bonfield Fire Department, Papineau-Cameron Fire Department, Paramedic Services, and North Bay OPP officers were among the first on scene, responding to 911 calls and reports of injuries. Despite the debris-filled, low-visibility, and high-risk environment, these first responders courageously entered the park and moved from site to site, reaching injured campers and extracting them from danger. Their efforts allowed paramedics to treat and transport victims to area hospitals, undoubtedly preventing further harm or fatalities.

By the next day, June 22nd, 2025, the broader regional impact of the storm became fully apparent. Two separate sections of Highway 17, both east and west of Samuel de Champlain Park, suffered major flooding and water damage. These conditions led to full highway closures, disrupting traffic flow and complicating emergency operations across the region. The North Bay OPP Auxiliary and Cadets stepped up

immediately to assist with the highway closures, allowing frontline officers to remain focused on critical search and rescue efforts.

Meanwhile, emergency crews inside Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park continued to work through the night and into the morning, cutting fallen trees and clearing debris to access the park's interior. At the same time, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Dispatch had received 77 calls for service, including ambulance assists, dangerous condition reports, and property damage complaints.

In response, the Northeast Region Emergency Response Team (ERT) was deployed. Despite having just completed a two-week missing person search operation in Webwood and being scheduled for their only day off, Staff Sergeant Lefebvre and all ERT members voluntarily returned to duty without hesitation. They were joined by the K-9 Unit, SAVE Unit, and members of the North Bay OPP Detachment. These teams conducted a full-scale search in the park under punishing conditions — temperatures over 30°C, humidity of 100%, flooded trails, and widespread storm damage. Over a period of more than 10 hours, they searched and documented every campsite, ensuring that all park visitors were accounted for.

In parallel, OPP Aviation Services played a critical support role throughout the day. Their air assets enabled real-time aerial assessments of the scene and coordinated search efforts on the ground. The aerial support proved instrumental in both protecting responder safety and enhancing operational efficiency for ground teams navigating the chaotic landscape below.

As Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park operations reached resolution, a secondary emergency developed: Highway 630, the only access route to Kiosk Provincial Park, had suffered multiple flash flood washouts, rendering the road completely impassable. The washouts were so severe that reopening the highway was not expected for 7 to 10 days, effectively stranding more than 100 individuals and their pets in Kiosk with no alternate exit.

Without delay, the Incident Commander, ERT Team Leader, and OPP Aviation Services collaborated to formulate and execute an aerial evacuation plan. Utilizing OPP air resources, they successfully extracted stranded campers and animals from Kiosk Provincial Park and transported them to safety — avoiding what could have become a prolonged and dangerous isolation event in a remote location.

This letter formally recognizes and commends the remarkable response, coordination, and sacrifice shown by the following:

- Calvin Fire Department – Host and Command Agency
- Mattawa Fire Department
- North Bay Fire Department
- East Ferris Fire Department
- Bonfield Fire Department
- West Nipissing Fire Department
- Chief R. MAKI – South River/Machar Fire Dpt. (Mutual Aid Coordinator)
- District of Nipissing Paramedic Services
- North Bay OPP Detachment Officers, Auxiliaries, and Cadets
- Northeast Region Emergency Response Team (ERT)
- OPP K-9 Unit
- OPP SAVE Unit
- OPP Aviation Services
- Ontario Parks Staff and Rangers
- Emergency Management Ontario

These individuals and teams exhibited exceptional professionalism, extraordinary courage, and an unwavering commitment to public safety under the most demanding and hazardous conditions. Their collective efforts resulted in the safe extraction of injured persons, the full accounting of park guests, and the successful evacuation of stranded campers, all while maintaining a standard of conduct that reflects the highest ideals of service. We extend our deepest gratitude and commendation to all who participated in this complex and heroic response.

Sincerely,

William McMullen

Inspector William McMullen
Ontario Provincial Police
Incident Commander