

Dear Mayor Ed Holder,

I am writing to you today in hopes that you can help me accomplish a goal that I recently set for myself.

"A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself." Joseph Campbell

Last Saturday, December 8, 2018 the City of London quietly laid to rest a true hero; a man I know you had the pleasure of working with during your time as a board member of St. John Ambulance London-Middlesex.

W. Peter Harding KStJ served 38 years on the City of London Fire Department before retiring as a Deputy Chief in 1998. Chief spent 10 years working on a busy rescue truck responding to countless emergencies all over this city. He was a natural leader and those serving under Peter did so without question.

Peter joined St. John Ambulance in 1967 and held the position of Corps Superintendent for the last 18 years of his time there before retiring in 2007. In his role Peter was played a part in nearly every disaster experienced in Ontario and even outside of our city and province. Peter responded or oversaw countless numbers of requests for assistance from London Police Service, London Fire Department and other agencies. As an integral part of St. John Ambulance's Emergency Services Support Team, Peter assisted with the evacuation of Mississauga in 1979, train derailments in Hyde Park, Komoka, Pickering, Melbourne, Kerwood, Newbury and Chatham, tornadoes in Reeces Corners and Barrie in addition to the big Quebec ice storms. St. John was there to provide canteen services, communications support and even scene lighting for front line emergency workers so that they could focus on serving the public.

Peter was a founding board member of the London Food Bank with fellow firefighter Glen Pearson. He spent many years dedicated to growing the service so that it could reach those Londoners in need. Peter was sure to include the St. John Ambulance volunteers who still currently assist the London Food Bank by picking up donations from grocery stores and fire halls throughout the city.

Peter was also a Deputy Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus Brand #13404 and first vice president of the Irish Benevolent Society's London chapter from 2013-2014.

Peter was a true hero. He dedicated his entire life to the service of this city. It may sound cliché but he was the type of person who would give you the shirt off his own back. He constantly spent his own money on equipment and supplies that were used to help others. He oversaw the creation of London Search and Rescue, a group who continue to faithfully serve the City of London. He was the glue that held the London branch together and his retirement left a void no single person could fill. His work ethic and dedication was imparted on hundreds of cadets and members who had the pleasure of working with him and calling him friend.

This brings me to my goal. Peter deserves to be recognized for everything he did in service of this city. With the proposed new Fire Hall at Hamilton Rd and Old Victoria Rd coming before City Council over the coming months, I was hoping you would be willing to get behind my push to have the new hall named in Peter's honor. It is an honor that he would tell you he doesn't deserve but I can think of no better way to honor a great man, dedicated volunteer and as I said, true hero to this city. It takes a lot of courage to overcome your fear and jump head first into a dangerous situation to save others. Peter deserves any and every accolade that can be afforded to him even though he himself would say otherwise.

Thank you for taking time to read my email and I appreciate any and all help that you can offer to help me accomplish this or to honor him in some other way.

Sincerely,

Chris Swanton