



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 19, 2021

#### **Local firefighter to be awarded the Medal of Merit**

ONTARIO: The Firefighter's Medal of Merit is awarded to any firefighter in the province of Ontario for meritorious service above and beyond the call of duty. The Medal of Merit is given out for an emergency event where a firefighter or firefighters showed good judgement, and/or took a calculated risk to save a life.

#### **Brampton Fire and Emergency Services Firefighter Andreas Fortis**

On Thursday December 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 at approximately 9:00 am, off-duty firefighter Andreas Fortis came upon a young woman in possible distress.

While driving over the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge, he noticed a woman sitting on the side of the bridge. He stopped his vehicle to see if she needed help and as he approached, she rolled forward off the bridge plunging approximate 30 ft into the fast-flowing 12 Mile Creek.

He quickly called 911 to notify St Catharines emergency services of the situation.

By this time there were several witnesses that were pointing to her location in the water. The young woman had passed through several rapids before Andreas was able to find an entry point downstream.

With no personal protective equipment, off-duty firefighter Fortis entered the freezing waters and swam approximately 65 feet from the shoreline. After reaching the woman, he swam back to shore with her, having both drifted approximately 160 feet further downstream.

They were assisted out of the water by two bystanders. Once out, others assisted by giving up their coats and trying to warm the two up, since both were showing signs of hypothermia.

Niagara Emergency Medical Services and St. Catharines Fire Services arrived shortly after and the young woman was transported to hospital where she has since made a full recovery.

Off-duty firefighter Fortis distinguished himself by acting without hesitation to perform a fast, cold water rescue with disregard for his own safety to save a young woman with a family from certain death.

This demonstrates the meaning of bravery and sacrifice. On December 17, 2020 Firefighter Andreas Fortis was there and he answered that call.

## **Medal of Merit**

Since its inception in 1983, 57 Medal of Merits have been awarded for 35 separate incidents involving firefighters from 27 fire departments across Ontario.

Each nomination is reviewed by the Ontario Fire Marshal, the Mutual Insurance Association of Ontario and the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, these recipients will be presented the Medal of Merit at a later date.

For more information on the Medal of Merit visit [www.ffao.on.ca](http://www.ffao.on.ca) or contact Kevin McNeilly, president of the Fire Firefighters' of Ontario (FFAO) at [president@ffao.on.ca](mailto:president@ffao.on.ca).