

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs committee. Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Troy Doody. I am here on my own personal time to speak about the need for the legislature to allocate more money in the Executive Branch personnel services budget than what is now in LD210.

I have worked with the state 28 years this July. I started in Bangor, went to Stockholm/Woodland, and I have been working in Mars Hill and Presque Isle for over 20 years.

When I started, we never had the staffing issues we have today. There were all kinds of people. Without enough plows, we have roads closed and that is fire hazard for house fires. This could mean that if someone had a heart attack, some ambulances wouldn't be able to get in to help that person.

Staffing problems really started to come up around 2017, even before COVID broke out. I believe that is because wages starting driving people out, and our wages were not competing with other opportunities in the area. Our benefits package is nowhere near what it used to be. We are paying 5% of our insurance when we used to pay 0%. We have been sliding in the wrong direction and this is the result.

I'm not here to put anyone down. Don't want to blame anyone. I'm here to talk about the problems. I believe Commissioner Van Note and my managers would like to pay us more but they can't because of the current budget. Because of low wages, we have major Transportation Worker vacancies in Aroostook, and I hear it's a problem across the whole state. We have not been fully staffed in about 5 or 6 years. We had one worker a few years ago that fell asleep at the wheel, we cant keep going this way.

People are tired of working under current conditions. The towns are paying a lot more than MaineDOT and we are leaving. We have a lot of good drivers and workers in Aroostook, and we are going out of our way to ask them to help join MaineDOT, and when we ask they say "I cant afford to work for such low pay, they cant afford me". We lost a lot of good plow drivers because we are so understaffed that our workers have not been able to get time off. Understaffing has led to retention problems. Low pay has led to recruitment and retention problems.

The towns around us are paying \$25 dollars per hour for one example. Starting pay for DOT, is about \$19, with a \$2/hour stipend. We do not get the stipend pay with OT. These stipends are not permanent either, and that scares people away. Because if that stipend goes away, we'd be getting less than what McDonalds pays.

Closing the state employee pay gap would mean more people would come to work. There's a lot of good people out there who would like to work for us but cant because of the pay. With you support and leadership, we can fix this.

If this is not fixed sooner than later, this will only get worse and it's hard to say what that will look like on the ground.

Troy Doody