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## MEDIA RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Katz Non-Committal to Paramedics Concerns**

**2006/10/21** – In correspondence with the Paramedic Association of Manitoba, Mayor Sam Katz was non-committal to the Association's request that Winnipeg review their strategy surrounding the ongoing fire/paramedic amalgamation following next week's civic election.

"We're very disappointed with the response we received from the incumbent Mayor", said Eric Glass, Chairman of the Paramedic Association of Manitoba. "While he did acknowledge the very challenging conditions under which Paramedics are operating, he certainly didn't commit to any review of the current amalgamation strategy. In fact, reading between the lines I'd have to suggest he plans to maintain his support for the process despite the concerns we have raised.

In correspondence sent to all four mayoral candidates earlier this week the Paramedic Association of Manitoba outlined concerns related to Winnipeg's EMS system, and suggested that a newly elected Mayor "needs to show leadership by putting a hold on the current amalgamation strategy and asking all stakeholders to work collectively in efforts to ensure a sustainable and effective EMS system for Winnipeg".

Mayor Katz seems to defend the amalgamation strategy in his letter to the Association. In it he states, "the best professional advice that City Council and I have received is to utilize the training and skills of our full fire paramedic complement to respond to calls for medical emergencies to get trained professionals on-scene as soon as possible". Glass says Winnipeg's current Mayor is missing the point. "We agree with the concept that using medically trained fire fighters or other first responders as a component within the EMS system is good practice. There's plenty of evidence to support that. But the research also supports integrating paramedics more fully into the health care system and using their clinical abilities to alleviate some of the stresses in that environment. The decision to utilize only cross-trained firefighter/paramedics in Winnipeg's EMS system is very short-sighted in that it bucks the trend that we see right across the country to recognize paramedics as healthcare professionals".

In response to Katz's position, the Paramedic Association of Manitoba has warned that the problems Winnipeg is currently experiencing...ambulance and paramedic shortages, the inability to attract experienced paramedics to the City of Winnipeg and ineffective utilization of paramedics within the health care system...will continue to mount unless the amalgamation is reviewed.

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba is the professional association for paramedics licensed to practice in Manitoba, promoting excellence in pre-hospital emergency medical care.

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