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## MEDIA RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **External Review of Health System Welcomed by Manitoba's Paramedics**

**2007/04/10** – The Paramedic Association of Manitoba welcomed today's announcement by Health Minister Theresa Oswald that an external review committee has been appointed to assess Manitoba's regional health authority system. "We were encouraged when the government announced this initiative in their Throne Speech last November," Eric Glass, Chairman of the Paramedic Association of Manitoba, said earlier today. "This puts the wheels in motion."

Ambulance and paramedic services, which until 1996 were the responsibility of municipal governments, fall under the core health services now overseen by the various regional health authorities. Some regions (Winnipeg and Brandon for example) ensure emergency medical services are available by contracting with large EMS service providers. A few regions have assumed all responsibility for owning and operating ambulance services within their geographic boundaries. Still others employ a combination of owning and contracting paramedic service.

"We applauded the concept of an external review process when we met with Minister Oswald late last year," said Jodi Possia, Association Vice-Chair. "Manitoba has eleven regional health authorities and each is very distinct in their approach to the delivery of emergency medical services. As a result, staffing models, alternatives to improve on system efficiencies, and even the level of care provided by paramedics across the province is inconsistent. It's our hope that this review will open the door to a more coordinated, efficient and effective delivery of ambulance and paramedic service across the province.

As a component of the health care system, emergency medical services is one that is continually crossing regional boundaries. Ambulances are frequently transporting patients between regions for diagnostic and treatment options, and even respond to emergency calls in bordering RHAs. There are more than 30 licensed land ambulance operators in the province, and the resulting service is often inconsistent not only between regions, but even within them.

"We think this is an excellent opportunity to review all aspects of regional health delivery, including emergency medical services," adds Glass. "We will be submitting our views to the review committee and look forward to ensuing recommendations that will modernize and improve the care our paramedics are able to provide to all Manitobans." The Paramedic Association of Manitoba has been encouraging the provincial government to address inconsistencies in terms of patient care and look at alternatives for service delivery that would ensure resource utilization is both effective and efficient.

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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