



Backgrounder:
***Emergency Medical Services
Manitoba's Quiet Crisis***

May 11, 2007

Paramedic Association of Manitoba Makes Recommendations to Improve Pre-hospital Care

Context

The environment in which paramedics work is characterized by increasing public needs and a greater reliance on emergency medical services within the health care system. As our population ages and the pressures on our health care system continue to grow, it's only reasonable to expect this trend to continue for many years to come. Policy makers must place more emphasis on ambulance and paramedic services to not only ensure our pre-hospital care system is in a position to meet these demands, but to improve our emergency health care system in general.

The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians considers pre-hospital care delivered by paramedics to be an essential link in the health care system. In many Canadian jurisdictions, politicians and health care administrators have opted to invest in paramedic services to help alleviate emergency room backlogs and meet community needs in non-traditional roles. Definitive treatment provided by paramedics for life threatening conditions has the potential not only save to lives but also minimize the reliance on already stressed facility resources such as ERs and intensive care units. Manitoba policy makers should be encouraged to recognize paramedics as health care professionals and explore opportunities in this area as they develop strategies to balance public needs and expectations with emerging trends in the health care industry.

Summary of Recommendations

Emergency Medical Services – Manitoba's Quiet Crisis expands on the following five recommendations:

1. The Paramedic Association of Manitoba recommends that government funding for emergency medical services be increased immediately to 1.8% of the provincial health care budget.

Despite the increased reliance on emergency medical services within our health care system in both traditional and non-traditional roles, EMS is not funded as an essential health service.

- Manitoba ranks last among provinces in percentage of total provincial health care dollars spent on ambulance service, currently allocating only 1.1% of health expenditures to this area.
- 1.8% represents the average of Canadian provincial EMS expenditures as related to their total provincial health care budgets.
- Stable funding is required to address serious human resource issues as well as system development and sustainability.

2. The Paramedic Association of Manitoba recommends the provincial government acknowledge the need for a health education model and professional credentials for paramedics.

The current pressures on our health care system have shifted the traditional model of pre-hospital emergency care from predominately public safety to that of health care delivery.

- Department of Health policy direction must ensure paramedics are recognized as members of the health care delivery team and are clearly positioned to play a more significant and expanded role in health care.



3. The Paramedic Association of Manitoba recommends the provincial government assist with the development of a paramedic education program within a recognized and respected post-secondary health sciences faculty.

Today's paramedic needs a much broader range of health education that allows them to assume greater responsibility for patient assessment and treatment and enables them to practice in a multi-disciplinary health environment. To validate that role and ensure credibility for graduates as they interact with other allied health professionals, Manitoba needs an education model for paramedics with strong affiliations to other health sciences programs.

- Many Canadian jurisdictions have moved toward diploma and degree programs in paramedicine.
- Sustainability of our EMS system relies in part on access to professional career development and advancement, requiring recognition and portability of educational credentials.

4. The Paramedic Association of Manitoba recommends the provincial government move quickly toward the formation of an ambulance service delivery model that improves efficiencies and increases the level of pre-hospital emergency care provided by paramedics across Manitoba.

There are significant disparities in how EMS is delivered across the province today. Manitoba's emergency medical services system is not well coordinated, lacks efficiencies and accountabilities and has widely variable levels of performance across the province.

- All transporting ambulances should be staffed by paramedics capable of providing advanced medical treatment.
- An administration and management structure should be developed that ensures more appropriate coordination of all paramedic and ambulance resources.

5. The Paramedic Association of Manitoba recommends the provincial government ensure paramedics are recognized as health professionals, and that steps are taken to grant self-regulation to the profession of paramedicine in Manitoba during the regulatory reform initiative.

Self-regulation acknowledges that a profession itself, having evolved over time and developed a specialized body of knowledge, is in the best position to determine standards for education and practice and to ensure that these standards are met. Over the course of the past decade, paramedics in Manitoba have demonstrated accountability and a commitment to "raising the bar" within their profession.

- Paramedics should be recognized through legislation as health care professionals.

Working Together

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba is committed to working with government, regulators, health administrators and other EMS stakeholders to enhance our pre-hospital emergency health system. It is our hope that these recommendations encourage policy makers to consider proactive measures to address these issues in an effort to improve health care for all Manitobans.

Emergency Medical Services – Manitoba's Quiet Crisis is available for viewing online at www.paramedicsofmanitoba.ca

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