



Manitoba Paramedics... Responding for Life

October 16, 2006

City of Winnipeg
Mayoral Candidates

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba is not a union or labour organization. We are the professional body for paramedics licensed in Manitoba, and strive to promote excellence in pre-hospital emergency health care and within our profession. It is out of concern for both that we suggest Winnipeg must review its present plan for fire/paramedic amalgamation.

Winnipeg's Emergency Medical Services system is in critical condition!

FACTS:

- Winnipeg “runs out of ambulances” on a very frequent basis;
- 39% of Winnipeg Paramedics working on ambulances have less than three years experience;
- 51% of Winnipeg Paramedics working on ambulances have less than five years experience;
- 50% of the Paramedics hired by Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS) in the past three years have transferred to Fire Suppression;
- 5% of Winnipeg's Paramedics have resigned from WFPS in the past three years to pursue alternative practice options;
- While 15 Paramedics were hired by WFPS in 2006, 4 resigned, 11 transferred to Fire Suppression, 3 retired and 8 were promoted to managerial positions, leaving a net of -11.

The decision 10 years ago to amalgamate fire suppression and paramedic services within the City of Winnipeg was made for the wrong reason. While there is evidence to support utilization of medically trained fire fighters in an emergency first response capacity, to suggest they form the backbone of a core health service simply to justify their day to day existence is fiscal politics at its worst. Other major Canadian centers that considered the amalgamation of their fire and paramedic services now denounce the concept. Some have integrated administrations to achieve fiscal efficiencies, and others utilize medically trained fire fighters in a first response capacity where appropriate. But the expectation of successfully cross training fire fighters and paramedics and expecting a high degree of proficiency in both professions is widely considered unattainable.

Paramedic Association of Manitoba Inc.

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FACTS:

- Education to become a Primary Care Paramedic can take 1 – 2 years; education to become an Advanced Care Paramedic takes 2 – 3 years;
- Ambulance service is a Core Health service and a responsibility of the Regional Health Authorities, not Civic or Municipal government;
- The Emergency Medical Services Chiefs of Canada, this country's management leaders in emergency medical services, believes the value of EMS in the future is linked to an expanded role in primary health care and the Canadian Health Care system.

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba questions both the medical proficiency of fully amalgamating fire and paramedic services in Winnipeg, and the ability to sustain such a system. Emergency treatment for life threatening conditions, that only a few years ago had to be delivered by physicians in a hospital setting, can now be provided by paramedics in the field. Advanced care paramedics are health care practitioners, many having completed years of medical training, and just like other health care providers they need to work within that setting to maintain a high degree of academic expertise and medical competence. Winnipeg's current amalgamation model does not promote the concept of integration within the overall health care system, and as such moves away from the national trend and recommendations made by industry leaders across Canada. Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service is already experiencing difficulties in the area of paramedic recruitment, and this trend will continue. Tactics unbecoming of professional organizations are being used by WFPS and the City of Winnipeg in efforts to solidify an amalgamation that is not working.

The City of Winnipeg must reconsider its decade old decision to amalgamate fire and paramedic services. Winnipeg needs to work closely with the provincial Government, Manitoba Health and the Regional Health Authorities to find an acceptable and more appropriate model for the delivery of emergency medical services in the City. If elected Mayor of the City of Winnipeg on October 25th, you must be prepared to show leadership in this area by stopping the current amalgamation strategy and asking all stakeholders to work collectively in efforts to rebuild a sustainable and effective EMS system for Winnipeg and, in fact, all Manitobans.

Respectfully,

Original signed by

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