

July 2, 2006

Mr. Jack Penner
MLA – Emerson
Room 227, Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB. R3C 0V8

Dear Mr. Penner:

I am concerned about comments attributed to you by various media outlets following the announced closure of the ambulance service in Emerson.

Recent changes to legislation regulating the operation of ambulance services in Manitoba will not “*hinder health care delivery in rural Manitoba*”, as suggested by your comments over the weekend. Quite the opposite, Mr. Penner, these licensing amendments help move our emergency medical services system in a direction that ensures Manitobans are guaranteed effective and responsive emergency medical care when they most need it.

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba has been advocating much needed improvements to EMS personnel licensing and service delivery standards for many years. Until the Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act was proclaimed on April 1st of this year, Manitoba had the lowest training requirements for ambulance personnel in this country. Not only did that mean patients were unable to receive appropriate pre-hospital treatment in true emergency situations, it placed significant and unfair burden on the very people called upon to provide that medical assistance. I doubt you would promote the use of under-trained physicians or nurses in rural hospitals...I question why you promote a lower level of health care for patients before they reach these facilities.

Change is never easy. Without doubt the new licensing requirements for EMS personnel and services will trigger the need to make some very difficult personal and administrative decisions. But emotion and political manoeuvring have to take a back seat to the real issue here...ensuring Manitobans receive appropriate emergency health care. The reality is that emergency medical services can significantly enhance public health services and help mitigate rising health care costs. Rather than attempting to instil fear in rural communities through unsubstantiated allegations that such change might “*put patient safety at risk*”, I suggest we work together to further strengthen our EMS system as outlined in correspondence we sent to all members of the Manitoba Legislature earlier this year.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss your concerns with you at any time.

Respectfully,

Original signed by

Eric Glass
Chairman
Paramedic Association of Manitoba

cc – Hon Tim Sale
Mr. Hugh McFadyen
Ms. Myrna Driedger