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MEDIA RELEASE

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Ambulance Services In Critical Condition

2002/08/03 - Ambulance services across much of the province may have difficulty responding to emergency calls on a timely basis throughout this summer long weekend as a result of continuing staff shortages.

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba has learned that as many as six ambulances may not be available this weekend in the Interlake Region due to a critical shortage of casual and on-call paramedics. “It would appear that a number of services that normally operate multiple ambulances will have to try to make do with only one,” says Eric Glass, Chairman of the Association. “To residents and travelers in some locations the problem may not be quite so obvious. But anyone requiring emergency medical services in areas surrounding Lundar or Gimli could notice substantial delays before an ambulance arrives.” Lundar ambulance service has been unable to guarantee staffing over the course of the entire weekend. And Gimli, which would normally have three ambulances available to handle their increased weekend population, can staff only one.

Ambulance services in other regions may also find themselves stretched to the limit as they attempt to cope with the usual increase in long weekend emergency calls. “Services in Elie, Minnedosa and Carberry are all struggling to stay operational this weekend”, says Glass. “And we suspect the problem runs far wider than just those communities.”

For quite some time now paramedics across Manitoba have been urging the provincial government to take action to address concerns related to the provision of emergency medical services throughout the province. According to Mr. Glass, “Numerous studies over the past decade have recommended strong measures be undertaken to correct system deficiencies, yet little action has been seen to date. Without serious attention, the first link in our health care chain, pre-hospital emergency care, may be on the brink of collapse.”

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba represents the professional interests of Emergency Medical Services practitioners to ensure the well-being and appropriate medical treatment of patients.

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