



MEDIA RELEASE

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Paramedics Offer Emergency-Care Proposals

2004/01/22 – The recent appointment of a task force instructed to make recommendations for improving emergency-care in Winnipeg has prompted the Paramedic Association of Manitoba to remind government officials of the need to better utilize paramedics throughout the health care system.

Extended emergency room waits, and delays associated with patient triage and acceptance by hospital facilities, threaten to impact the availability of EMS resources needed to respond to emergency calls. In rural areas, on again-off again problems associated with hospital staffing can lead to extended transport times, increasing the time paramedics and ambulances are away from their home community. In correspondence to the province's Minister of Health, the Association suggests, "Highly trained paramedics, experienced and more fully integrated into the health care system, are part of a long-term solution to ER problems in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba"

"We certainly recognize the need for immediate measures to address problems faced by emergency room staff and patients on a daily basis", says Paramedic Association of Manitoba Chairman Eric Glass. "But, as we've suggested in the past, real improvement in health care relies on thinking "outside the box" to achieve true systemic reform."

According to the Paramedic Association of Manitoba, issues that should be considered include:

- Increased training levels of paramedics throughout the province;
- Increasing the number of Urgent Care facilities available, and enabling paramedics to refer or transport to these facilities in lieu of ERs when appropriate;
- Enhanced treat and release or treat and referral procedures, resulting in the need for fewer ER admissions;
- Developing protocols that allow paramedics to transport to "most appropriate" facilities, expediting definitive care and reducing resource utilization for patient transfers;
- Utilizing paramedics in health facilities to assist with triage, patient re-evaluation and high workload efforts including resuscitative measures.

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba says EMS system improvements and recognition of the skill sets paramedics offer to the health care system can be instrumental in efforts to find long-term solutions to emergency-care woes.

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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