

MAHCP Members met with Theresa Oswald Minister of Health August 15, 2012

Three MAHCP members along with President Wendy Despina and Executive Director Lee Manning met with Health Minister Theresa Oswald, Executive Director Health Emergency Management Manitoba Health, Gerry Delorme and Executive Director Health Workforce Strategies Manitoba Health Dr. Brenna Shearer. The members gave presentations on their respective occupations and the unique and common challenges that each are facing.

Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE), Nicole Aylward, RD, CDE, CPT identified the educational requirements, role and scope of practice of Diabetes Educators for Minister Oswald and her committee. **She highlighted the discrepancy in compensation between Diabetes Educators in Manitoba.** Minister Oswald indicated her understanding of the issues. Ms. Aylward explained that “Diabetes Educators are health care professionals who focus on helping people with and at risk for diabetes and related conditions achieve behaviour change goals which, in turn, lead to better clinical outcomes and improved health status.” Ms. Aylward thanked the Minister for her support for the new Manitoba Pediatric Insulin Pump Program and the impact that program is having on young Manitobans with diabetes.

Medical Social Worker Florence See-Toh, BSW, MSW presented members concerns with regards to the expanding functions and increasing responsibilities for Social Workers. Ms. See-Toh explained that “the level of complexity in the management of health needs along with the level of acuity presented by many health care recipients has significantly increased the workload of social workers both in hospital and in community settings.” **She noted the key issues facing Social Work are the lack of competitive salaries, identifying that Manitoba salaries are the lowest in the country, and that investment in recruitment and retention of staff must be addressed.** Ms. See-Toh provided supporting data highlighting salaries across the country and demonstrating the length of stay for a full time Social Worker ranges between 1 – 8 years of service. She also provided in-depth explanations of the current extent and scope of practice for Social Workers in health care today. Ms. See-Toh addressed the difficulties in pursuing higher education and the need for training in specialized accredited programs.

President Despina explained that all of the examples that Ms. See-Toh provided are magnified and felt more acutely throughout the province.

Primary Care Paramedic (PCP), Cheryl Beal, PCP explained to the Minister that Manitoba’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provide the very definition of “front-line” health care delivery. Ms. Beal acknowledged that in recent years there has been much government support and significant advancements made to EMS delivery in Manitoba. She highlighted some of these such as the introduction of Manitoba Transportation and Coordination Centre (MTCC) and STARS, renovations to existing EMS facilities and the building of new EMS stations, and the delivery of a Red River College based PCP program to name a few. She noted that these initiatives and that the Minister’s commitment to EMS are appreciated. Ms. Beal stressed the importance of high consistent standards for maintenance of equipment and vehicles in order to provide high quality emergency medical care. Ms. Beal had several suggestions as to how to

better meet “our patients” needs, including a review of the on-call staffing model, the need for an Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) in each Provincial ambulance, standardization of training for ACP, and commitment of resources in all the geographical regions for equipment items such as hydraulic stretchers, ‘track’ stair-chairs, winter tires. Ms. Beal stressed the importance of self-regulation of EMS providers in Manitoba. **Professional self-regulation would promote best practice and EMS practitioner accountability. This is a high stress profession with documented risk of burn-out and low salary compensation compared to other provinces and indeed a lack of standardization within the province.**

Minister Oswald stressed her commitment to EMS and to continue looking for opportunities for improvement.

President Despins reaffirmed to Minister Oswald that as noted at previous meetings recruitment, retention, salaries and self-regulation are a common thread amongst each of these professions, as well as many of the other professions that MAHCP represents. President Despins also highlighted the supplemental materials that MAHCP had provided as attachments to each of the briefing documents, including MAHCP’s submission in support of the Paramedic Association of Manitoba (PAM) application for designation as a Regulated Health Profession. Along with highlighting the issues and concerns, the MAHCP members offered recommendations for consideration by the Ministers office.

Minister Oswald reinforced her commitment to continue with on-going meetings with MAHCP offering MAHCP three new meeting dates which have already been confirmed. MAHCP is committed to bring members forward and to have their voices heard by the Manitoba Government.