

## **RURAL PARAMEDIC STAFFING CRISIS AT BREAKING POINT, PUTTING MANITOBANS AT RISK**

**Winnipeg MB**, August 26, 2021 - Paramedic staffing shortages in rural Manitoba have reached critical levels, according to the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP), the allied health care union representing over 800 rural paramedics. Rising vacancies are causing paramedics to work unprecedented levels of overtime to fill considerable gaps in service.

"Manitobans count on paramedics to be there in the event of an emergency, when every minute matters," said MAHCP President Bob Moroz. "Unfortunately Shared Health is leaving staffing vacancies unfilled, expecting fewer and fewer paramedics to make up the difference. That approach is putting patients and paramedics in danger."

MAHCP is reporting a growing number of alarming statistics, including:

- Paramedics in Interlake-Eastern region consistently operating short-staffed by 20-30%.
- Paramedics called to respond to medical emergencies in communities up to three hours away due to lack of staff.
- Recent instance where no ambulances were available for entire North Eastman area.
- 24-hour periods where 10-15 ambulances are out of service in one area of the province, with shortages occurring elsewhere at the same time.
- 33% fewer paramedics available than there should be on some shifts in Prairie Mountain Health region.
- Up to 30 paramedic vacancies recently in Prairie Mountain Health, with leaves going unfilled.
- Longstanding staffing shortages in Northern Manitoba.

At the same time, emergency rooms in both Winnipeg and rural Manitoba are experiencing capacity issues, further adding to paramedic workload. Paramedics are often tied down in offload delays for hours at a time, or they must transport patients hours away from their primary hospital because rural facilities are not accepting ambulance patients. In addition, paramedics are seeing an increasing number of transfers for non-urgent patients in order to free up space in Winnipeg hospitals, often in the middle of the night, in an effort to address ER wait times. These issues are further impacting an already stretched paramedic workforce.

"We are hearing from paramedics that they are burnt out and some are choosing to leave as a result, compounding an already critical staffing problem," said Moroz. "Paramedics are dedicated to their profession and the communities they serve, but Shared Health is putting them in an impossible position. They are beyond the breaking point and they need relief now."

*The Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals is the union representing over 6500 members from all over Manitoba, including 800 rural paramedics. MAHCP represents 85% of Allied Health Care Professionals in Manitoba, working in more than 190 disciplines in health care settings across the province.*

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