

PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT  
Attention: FRED BANHAM CAO  
CHAIR AND DIRECTORS

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October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

I'm requesting your attention and action about my frustrations and concerns resulting from the emergency response delivered by the ambulance and Dawson Creek Hospital to my husband. I'm addressing this letter to all institutions that I feel have the power to open a review inquiry which could improve the system. These are indispensable in order for the all residents of this province to receive equal medical and emergency services. Regardless of your position, I'm asking you to consider all concerns equally important. These concerns cannot be isolated because in order to improve the system that placed my husband's life in further danger, we must all work cooperatively. At this point I want to ensure that the lives of all residents of this province and country are equally valued and entitled to the same benefits. However, if no action is taken I will not hesitate to pursue a lawsuit.

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, at about 6:45 a.m., I woke up and realized my husband was having a seizure, as his body was convulsing, foam was erupting from his mouth, his eyes were fixed and without focus and unable to breathe. I phoned 911 and the operator asked me: "Do you need an ambulance, fire or police?" I requested the ambulance but asked her to dispatch the fire rescue team because I live out of town and they most likely will reach us faster than the ambulance. I even mentioned how a few years back, as a bystander I had witnessed the ambulance take 40 minutes to come to Walmart's parking lot to the rescue of a young teenager with epileptic seizure (Walmart's manager phoned 911 twice). With my 14 year old son we followed the operator's direction of moving my husband to the floor and started CPR right away as my husband had no pulse and was not breathing.

The paramedics arrived about 20 minutes later unprepared to shock a hairy chest, so too many minutes were wasted finding a way to shave him. The two paramedics were also physically unable to move my husband's 86 kg body down one set of stairs to the main floor, therefore more valuable minutes (about 15) were wasted waiting for extra help to come and help. Five RCMP came to my house to help the paramedics. My husband received 3 shocks. It took more than 1 hour to get to the hospital from the moment I placed the call. Once in the hospital, his pulse was restored (about an hour and half after I had placed the call).

I had to convince the doctor on call to go against the procedure and contact our family doctor to get a more accurate medical history. I had to deny authorization to send my husband to the smaller hospital at Fort St. John. I also had to provide the doctor with convincing arguments of why Grande Prairie hospital was a better facility for my husband. I had to remain calm as I watched the nurse holding my husband's breathing tube finding funny blocking his airways. In order to stabilize my husband, the doctor had to induce him into a comma with sedatives. My husband already stable and ready to travel to Grande Prairie had to once again wait for the ambulance to be ready to transport him. It was fully 3 hours before the ambulance left for Grande Prairie hospital.

Here are the concerns requiring your action:

- Why did it take the ambulance so long to reach my house, which is less than 10 minutes drive from their location?
- Why was my request for sending both, the ambulance and the fire department was denied when in many other communities this is a common practice which doesn't even need to be requested.
- Why was I denied the fire department, when the paramedics needed extra help as two paramedics were not able to attend to all of the emergency's needs.
- How is the labor dispute with the paramedics affect our lives and safety?
- Why is it up to the ambulance to dispatch the fire department or police?
- Why is not the 911 operator able to dispatch the ambulance, the fire department or RCMP, when it is this operator that assesses the situation, and continues to be knowledgeable of any changes happening during the call (i.e. Stopped breathing).
- Why did the paramedic call the RCMP rather than the fire department to come and help? The fire department is not only well trained with first aid but most importantly better equipped than the RCMP for attending medical emergencies.
- Was the RCMP called because it's cheaper than calling the Fire department when the location is out of the city limits? Let me remind you that I do live within the fire protection limit!!
- What was the level of experience of both paramedics who attended my husband's emergency? Are they naturally incompetent or fairly new to the job? If newly trained, shouldn't they be placed with a more experienced paramedic?
- Why was the ambulance crew not equipped to shave a hairy chest? Did they only have one chest patch? It's my understanding that under such circumstances several patches can be used to remove the hair or.
- Why two physically fit paramedics were unable to carry my husband's 86 kg body? Let me emphasize he is tall but not obese, we moved him from the bed with my skinny 14 year old son, and I offered to help carry him downstairs.
- Why was the extra help not requested right away? Why did we have to waste time waiting for help to arrive?
- Is the hospital's procedure under the code blue of not contacting the family doctor reasonable? Please consider the fact that my husband went to bed a perfectly healthy 46 years old man, non smoker or drinker, doesn't do drugs, very fit and with no medical history other than the odd cold. How can the doctor on call refuse to obtain the most valuable information that may help to reach a diagnosis or save his life?
- It is my understanding that the cat scan in Dawson Creek had been down for a week, therefore, when my husband arrived at the hospital, the doctor/hospital already knew he would need to be sent away. Why was the ambulance not ordered right away? Why did my husband have to wait for the ambulance rather than the ambulance being ready for the

- patient? Why did it take more than 3 hours to prepare the ambulance to transport him to Grande Prairie?
- Why would a doctor from a regional hospital be sending a patient in need of critical care to the smaller hospital of Fort St. John? I am certain that given the same emergency, no doctor in this town will be sending their loved one to Fort St. John, so WHY SEND MY HUSBAND?
  - Why would the doctor be sending a patient in need of critical care further north, when we all know that the better facilities are in the south? Thus, adding further delays on transportation and care?
  - Is Fort St. John's hospital a better facility and better equipped than Dawson Creek's for attending such life threatening emergencies?
  - Would Fort St. John be able to provide the same intensive care than my husband received in Grande Prairie?
  - Why was I told that it takes at least 4 hours to get the air ambulance because it comes from Vancouver, when Grande Prairie has an air ambulance that has transported other patients from Dawson Creek hospital?
  - How many air ambulances does this province have and where are they geographically located?
  - Given my husband medical emergency, how can a doctor tell me "to calm down and not to worry because we have time"? This was a race against time, because the doctor was unable to make any diagnosis and there was the possibility of stroke to which draining the brain is critical and must be done as soon as possible. Is Fort St. John hospital able to perform such procedures?
  - What was the dosage of sedatives and other medicines given to my husband, was the dosage given too high thus threatening his life? Was this why it took him 4 days to wake up?
  - Why the residents of Dawson Creek are not entitled to the same benefits as other residents of this province or this country? My husband is a taxpayer and an honourable citizen, why is he not entitled to the same care as someone living in a bigger community?
  - Why are the ambulance and local hospital unable to provide as effective care and emergency response as was delivered by the RCMP?

I would like to point out that the RCMP delivered an outstanding response sending 5 officers. I have no doubts that the officers treated the emergency very seriously and were committed to help us. They rushed to my home to help my husband, my children and myself and at no moment treated the situation nonchalantly. One of the officers took over the CPR so that the paramedics could insert the tubes, etc. The other officers were also helping the paramedics in whatever way they could. The officer named Jeff took my children and me and tried to calm us down. You must realize that more than 1 had passed since I called the ambulance, more than 20 minutes have passed since the RCMP arrived and my husband is lying on the floor moribund with no pulse. Jeff and another officer were trying to calm us because the fact that the paramedics were so unprepared made me nervous and my children could see that their father was dying. I truly

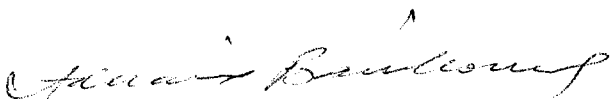
appreciate and commend all the officers for how they went out of their way to comfort my children under such traumatic experience, and support us with everything possible. Constable Sabo left me a card with his cell number; even after leaving the hospital he was still available and willing to help me. It is also my understanding that another officer did the CPR on the ambulance when on their way to Dawson Creek hospital. I'm also very thankful to the officers for quickly arranging a volunteer from Victim's Support Services. Gloria was there promptly counselling us and willing to help in every way, which included giving me a ride home. I'm extremely grateful to the RCMP for everything they did for my family.

My husband is now recovering from a complete cardiac arrest. He received the best care at Grande Prairie's Hospital and at the Royal Alexandra in Edmonton where he had an ICD implanted. I would like to emphasize that my husband's pulse was restored at the trauma table of Dawson Creek Hospital, more than hour and half after I phoned 911. My son did CPR for about 20 minutes, the RCMP officers for about 45 minutes altogether, and the paramedics for the rest of the time. My husband owes his life to his son and the RCMP officers, because the two paramedics on their own could not have saved him.

I'm addressing all these important concerns with the purpose of making you aware that the system (not the individuals) Dawson Creek has in place must be improved and changed. This is essential so that no other resident of this community endures the same incompetent medical service and attention my husband experienced. I'm hoping that you will be taking all these concerns seriously. We are all obligated to pay our taxes which fund our medical and emergency response services, so why we are not entitled to receive equal services?

My final question is why in this province are not all residents entitled to the same medical services. Are the lives of those living in bigger communities more valued and worth saving than those living in smaller communities such as Dawson Creek? And let's not forget that the province is obtaining very significant and generous financial revenue from this area, thus the least the province can do is provide us with the same services, because right now we are all equal, but some are more equal than others. I'm hoping to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,



Adriana Bankowski

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