



Press Release
For Immediate Release

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AAHP Urging Government to Reverse Decision on Private Air Ambulance Services

St. John's - The Association of Allied Health Professionals (AAHP) fears privatization of the vital air ambulance service will risk the safety of patients and employees, and impact patient care. The Association is joining in the call to Government to reverse its recent decision.

“Our members have long raised safety issues related to privately contracted air ambulance services. We are concerned Government’s decision will only increase safety risks, for patients and our members,” says Gord Piercey, AAHP’s President. “This is just another example of not protecting the public healthcare system or the professionals who are holding it together.”

The AAHP represents the clinical Medical Flight Specialists responsible for patient care during air ambulance flights. Mr. Piercey says, “These are highly skilled and very dedicated healthcare professionals who play a vital role in the continuum of critical and emergency care in our province, responsible for caring for gravely injured or ill patients.” He adds “When our Medical Flight Teams respond to dangerous medical situations, they need to be focused on providing the best quality health care possible to help keep patients alive and stabilized until they reach a hospital. Our members, their patients and their families should not have to worry about unnecessary safety concerns associated with the aircraft and flights.”

Mr. Piercey notes his members’ have concerns that go beyond safety issues. “Our members are often frustrated with operational inconsistencies and inefficiencies amongst the various providers. We know a single, public air ambulance service is essential to ensure we all have access to the highest standards of service when medical emergencies arise. There should be no room for gaps in the system, given the demographic and geographic challenges in this province.”

The AAHP and its members strongly believe that the public air ambulance system offers better quality services in all aspects.

“Compared to private providers, our members’ experience with their colleagues in the public system, like pilots for example, is that they are more practiced and often have more expertise in navigating medical situations. The public aircrafts are better equipped to respond to patients’ medical needs and can transport multiple patients in one flight. Our Team experiences fewer unplanned delays associated with mechanical aircraft issues in the public system. Most importantly, they know that in poor weather conditions, flight decisions within the public system are made according to the highest standards of care – profit is not the bottom-line,” adds Piercey.



The Association agrees with recent statements that a public air ambulance system is less costly and more efficient than a private service. The stance of the AAHP is that Government has long ignored the advice of consultants and its employees. Instead, has piecemealed the services out to multiple private providers when it should have been investing in its own service, which has created its own set of challenges.

Piercey adds, “In recent months we have voiced concerns about the “creeping in” of private health care services in our province. The AAHP is concerned that health care is becoming more of a privilege than a right for citizens. The recent decision to privatize one of our most critical emergency health care services clearly demonstrates Government’s privatization agenda for our health care system.”

The AAHP is also asking residents in NL to join the call and demand that the public healthcare system be protected.

“We need to ask ourselves and Government, if we can privatize a critical emergency health service, what services are next on Government’s agenda?” concludes Piercey.

The AAHP is a public sector bargaining unit representing more than 800 highly skilled health professionals who collectively provide a range of preventative, diagnostic, technical and therapeutic healthcare and clinical support services across the lifespan and care continuum and in virtually all program areas within the health care system. With occupation-specific post-secondary education or training, AAHP Members are comprised mainly of regulated, community, clinical and therapeutic professionals. They contribute specialized expertise, education, research and leadership, and often work as integral members of collaborative health-care teams to improve the health and well-being of Newfoundland and Labradorians.

The AAHP represents 22 Allied Health Professionals including anesthesia assistants, audiologists, auditory verbal therapists, dietitians, medical flight specialists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists, sexologists, genetic counsellors, hyperbaric technologists, creative arts therapists, kinesiologists, orthoptists, pastoral care clinicians, prosthetists, orthotists, psychometrists, respiratory therapists, social workers and speech language pathologists.

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