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EMR Paramedics with BCEHS
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Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
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Adrian:

RE: BC EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES (BCEHS) EMR CONCERNS

Peter Milobar, in the house of Commons, recently stated that health care is in crisis. He referred to having three ER nurses at Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops, and yet another 40 patients in waiting areas. In another sector of health care, we believe BC Ambulance service is also in crisis.

We, Heather Eustache and Deb Stamer are currently certified as EMR's in the Province of British Columbia. We both have been hired as paramedics with BCEHS for approximately 15 years. Both of us are fortunate to have been posted in our home town of Barriere. Barriere is our town where we have both resided and raised our families. The community is a small knit community where we have served not only through BCEHS but through volunteering for various events and activities. For the past 15 years, we worked on a casual basis where shifts are allocated from individual availability submitted. We were always deemed qualified paramedics.

Over the past few years, BCEHS has changed administration principles and procedures. In the summer of 2021, BCEHS posted for permanent part time positions which is a step up from casual. These shifts were divided up as per a new agreement where we would of both qualified for a full-time position. Again, we were deemed qualified. Before fully releasing this new agreement it got cancelled and once again BCEHS made some changes and another new agreement was developed. This newest agreement was meant to provide full time positions for full time coverage in the community of Barriere along with other areas in BC. The agreement now states EMR's will not qualify, the minimum certification required will be Primary Care Paramedic (PCP). This new agreement has caused several concerns for qualified EMR's within BCEHS:

1. All of a sudden, EMR's are not qualified. This has left Barriere ambulance station short staffed many times. We were never offered a full-time position. Their expectations are that EMR's can only fill in as needed. At this point any EMR would have to find other employment to survive.
2. The town of Barriere has hired several PCP's to fill these full time positions. Most of those hired do not live in the town, have no interest in the town and truly can't wait to transfer out of the town. They continuously take days and night off which in return causes vacant shifts and at times leaving Barriere without an ambulance.

Had the EMR's been deemed qualified (don't know why all of a sudden we are not), this could have eliminated those vacant shifts and an empty ambulance bay.

The union for BCEHS sees this as a recruitment problem, where in reality it is a retainment problem. Had they retained the EMR's who have always been qualified up to this point by providing them full time positions in their respective communities, this problem would be near non-existence. The union is in the process of hiring individuals off the street to be drivers only – this is their solution.

Both Deb and I are trying to understand the reasoning behind these changes and decisions. For years we have been qualified paramedics, working in our home town of Barriere. We both would be more than happy to serve our community on a full-time basis. We strive to always set a good example in our community and be a good role model. We've developed strong relationships with surrounding communities. We are proud to be an active member of BCEHS.

We hope you take this letter seriously and make it known how disappointed we are and how disrespectful BCEHS treats their long-term employees. So again, BCEHS is in crisis.

If you have any questions or concerns or need clarification on anything, please feel free to contact either one of us.

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CC: Todd Stone, MLA
Ward Stamer, Barriere Mayor
Merlin Blackwell, Clearwater Mayor
Ken Christianson, Kamloops Mayor
Frank Caputo, Member of Parliament
Chief Shelly Loring, Simpcw Band Chief
Rosanne Casimir, Tk'emlups Band Chief
Troy Clifford, President, Ambulance Paramedics of BC, CUPE 873
Peter Milobar, Member of Parliament