

# Ambulance Paramedics Community Solutions



In Rural Communities

UBCM 2013

## The Problem

Rural communities face healthcare shortfalls for an aging population. As demand increases, resources are in decline.

## The Roadblocks

Restrained budgets and more healthcare regionalization leave rural communities under serviced and left behind.

## The Solution

Expanded roles for Paramedics create jobs and allow the delivery of essential healthcare in rural communities.

## Today's Challenges for Rural Communities

Many small to medium sized British Columbia communities are facing serious Paramedic recruitment and retention problems. Low emergency call volumes prevent adequate funding to justify the expense of full time Paramedic staffing. The withdrawal of locally funded Paramedic training has resulted in a steep decline of applicants for rural communities. Today, we face critical staffing shortages across the province.

This staffing shortage leaves many communities facing long periods of time with reduced or no ambulance service at all. With an aging population, it is even more important that all British Columbians have an active and reliable ambulance service in their community.



Along with staffing shortages, the regionalization of more and more healthcare services means patients face longer and longer travel times to receive the care they need.

The BC Ambulance Service must respond to these challenges by adapting to local needs and ensuring a reliable service to connect patients to the care they require.

## Roadblocks to Finding Solutions

Healthcare costs continue to grow and the need to find efficiencies within existing budgets is becoming more and more important. In order to maximize efficiencies, new healthcare delivery models need to be considered on a community-by-community basis.

The implementation of new ambulance delivery models require the key stakeholders all being able to work directly together. The existing Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) structure prevents these discussions.



## Did You Know?

The national standard for ambulance response times to urgent calls is 9 minutes. Currently, the BCAS averages approximately 13 minutes in metropolitan areas and significantly longer in rural areas.

Response times suffer due to high workload in metropolitan areas and staffing shortages in rural areas.

Most other Provinces in Canada have implemented new community based Paramedic services to address failing response times and workload issues.



No two communities have the same ambulance and healthcare problems, so solutions must be found which fit each specific area's need. BC Paramedics are a key part of BC's healthcare team and can be part of those solutions. Recent projects in Burns Lake and Midway are examples of how the BCAS, the Health Authority and the Paramedics union can work collaboratively to find unique solutions.

In this time of fiscal health restraints where resources, both human and financial, are stretched to the limit, an innovative design for the delivery of primary healthcare to rural communities is being considered. **Community Paramedicine**, while not a new idea, has never before been used in British Columbia.

Community Paramedicine is defined as a model of care whereby paramedics apply their training and skills in "non-traditional" community-based environments outside the usual emergency/transport model. Successful Community Paramedicine programs are being utilized in small Canadian areas like Pugwash, Nova Scotia. This program uses Paramedics to supplement local physician shortages. The result is keeping the local healthcare facility open, while keeping costs under control.

Development of Community Paramedicine programs in British Columbia can both help to alleviate stress on our healthcare system and attract qualified Paramedics to struggling rural communities. Community Paramedics can deliver healthcare such as; mental health services, care assessments, diabetes clinics, wound care and much more, right in the patient's home. All while actually saving money within the healthcare budget.

In order for new programs, such as Community Paramedicine, to be developed, it is critical that the key stakeholders are able to work directly with each other. Currently, the bargaining for Paramedic and Ambulance services occurs within the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA). Paramedics are a small part of the 45,000 employees encompassed by the FBA. As a result, discussions on Paramedic specific issues are often lost in the larger scheme. This has resulted in year after year of failed progress to resolve ambulance delivery issues. In order to discuss solutions, it is critical that Paramedics be removed from the FBA, into a separate and distinct bargaining association.

## Getting Involved In The Solution

Municipal representatives have a critical role in the decisions being made about healthcare services in your community. You know the needs of your community better than anyone else.

It is time for both your community's healthcare issues and the solutions to come to the forefront of British Columbia government discussions.

We ask that you write both the **Health Minister** and **Health Critic** to express your concerns for the state of ambulance services and healthcare in your community.

### We ask that you highlight:

- Your unique community issues
- Your support for new programs like Community Paramedicine
- Your support for bargaining changes to get the discussions started
- Share this with other community leaders



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### Want To Know More?

If you'd like to learn more about these programs, please visit us at:

[www.apbc.ca/cp](http://www.apbc.ca/cp)

BC Paramedics & Dispatchers  
A key part of BC's healthcare system and a valuable resource to your community.

