

Charlottetown Area Office, 100 Capital Drive, Charlottetown, PEI C1E 1E7

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8th, 2010

**After Reconsideration, Island EMS
Still Refuses to Change their Speed Cap Policy
Paramedics (CUPE Local 3324) Request Meeting with Minister Bertram ASAP**

Charlottetown – “After asking for time to ‘reconsider’ their arbitrary speed cap policy, Island EMS Inc. notified the Union last Friday (March 5th) that they are not changing anything,” says Bill McKinnon, CUPE National Representative.

CUPE represents approximately 100 Paramedics across Prince Edward Island working for Island EMS Inc. The policy prevents ambulances, with lights and sirens on, from travelling more than 10 kms over the speed limit, where the limit is 60 kms or less (and only two lanes of traffic), and only 20 kms over the speed limit, to a maximum of 120 kms /hr, when travelling on the highway. CUPE had requested a meeting with Minister Bertram, in writing, on February 1st, 2010 to discuss this issue, but at the time of the writing of this release no meeting had been arranged.

“The Island EMS policy, in our view, dangerously restricts Paramedic employees - members of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 3324 – in their ability to respond quickly and safely to medical emergencies for Prince Edward Islanders. Furthermore, this policy completely removes all professional discretion from the hands of our trained Paramedics. The Employer suggests that there is some safety reason for implementing this speed restriction on ambulances. Yet, against our best efforts we could not find a single record of an ambulance being involved in a motor vehicle accident on PEI, which was a direct result of excessive speed, during an emergency response.

“The *Highway Traffic Act of PEI* itself, at Section 237(1)(a), permits emergency vehicle drivers to “exceed the speed limit”, subject to having due regard for safety and road conditions. Nowhere in the Act will you find an arbitrary or subjective limit like this on the actual speed that emergency vehicles can travel, when responding to an emergency call.

Fortunately we did receive a commitment from Dr. Richard Wedge, Director of Medical Programs for PEI, at our meeting on February 25th, 2010, that if we were not satisfied with the response from Island EMS, after they reconsidered their policy, then he would arrange a meeting with CUPE Local 3324 and Health Minister Carolyn Bertram. Based on that commitment, I have made contact with Dr. Wedge’s office both by phone and in writing, asking that he set that meeting up as soon as our respective schedules permit. We look forward to the opportunity to place our concerns, and the clear concerns of Prince Edward Islanders, on this issue before the Minister and ultimately the Premier. It is our view, that every day this matter remains unresolved, is another day that Islanders are being put at risk,” concluded McKinnon.

For more information/or an interview, please contact: Bill McKinnon at 566-4006 or (902) 439-1055