

JAN
24
2012

Concerns About Chopper



The leader of the province's Liberal Party is echoing concerns from the Association of Allied Health Professionals about the safety of the Bell 206 helicopter that is used here for patient transport. AAHP Executive Director, Sharon King, says Medical Flight Specialists first raised the issue last spring, and Eastern Health's Quality and Risk Management Department concluded last year that there were a number of deficiencies with the aircraft that required attention. The union says it wants to discuss the matter with Health Minister Susan Sullivan, but has been told that can't happen until late February. On VOCM Nightline with Pete Soucy, King says the Bell 206 is so small, it can only transport a patient 250 pounds or less.

She says in many cases, a patient's feet actually extend into the cockpit, and medical equipment must rest either on the stretcher, or on the patient themselves.

King says they've heard that the Department of Health has ordered that another helicopter, the Bell 407, be retrofitted to address the safety problems, but she says that aircraft is only a few inches larger than the Bell 206.

Liberal Leader Dwight Ball told VOCM Nightline, this is the only province that uses the 206 for medical transport. He says government must listen to the people who have to work with the equipment every day.