



COMPTROLLER OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
1 CENTRE STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10007-2341
(212) 669-3500

WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.
COMPTROLLER

February 20, 2009

Nicholas Scoppetta
Commissioner
New York City Fire Department
9 MetroTech Center
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Dear Commissioner Scoppetta:

I write to express my concern regarding the New York City Fire Department's failure to disclose its plans for addressing the imminent closures of Mary Immaculate Hospital and St. John's Hospital in Queens. These closures are scheduled to take place by the end of this month, yet there has been no meaningful effort by your office to educate the surrounding communities about how these closures will impact the health and safety of area residents including transition plans for "911" emergency medical response and treatment services. I am also troubled by your failure to respond to inquiries from this office.

As I expressed to your office previously, and as further detailed in my recent report which I provided to your office, FDNY-EMS has not disclosed its plans to address the consequences of hospital closures. As you are no doubt aware, if these two closures are implemented, a total of 15 New York City emergency rooms will have closed since 2002. Indeed, an unprecedented four emergency rooms have closed within the brief time frame of only the last two years. One of these recent closures, Parkway Hospital, served some of the same communities as St. John's Hospital.

With the City's economy in decline and as increasing numbers of City residents lose their jobs and health insurance, there will be significant demands on emergency rooms as City residents' access to primary care decreases. With capacity already strained, crowded emergency rooms mean longer wait times for patients, fewer ambulances available to take calls, and possibly, diminished health outcomes as some ambulances are forced to travel farther in an emergency.

Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta
February 20, 2009
Page 2

I urge FDNY-EMS to take the lead in evaluating the impact of these two Queens hospital closures and that it publicly outline the steps necessary to minimize adverse impacts, including whether replacement services would be best provided by FDNY-EMS or by some other means. I further recommend that the Department hold a public hearing to allow community input. In addition, in the regrettable event that these closures proceed, FDNY-EMS should publish data indicating what effect, if any, the closures have had on ambulance response and turnaround times in the emergency rooms of the next closest hospitals.

It is becoming ever more urgent for FDNY-EMS to provide the public with its plans for dealing with these closures.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.C. Thompson, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

William C. Thompson, Jr.