

Green Party of Manitoba Response to Paramedics Questionnaire

Prepared by Dennis Bayomi, Deputy Leader (Health Critic) Sept 4/2023

QUESTIONNAIRE:

“As you are aware, the state of paramedic services in Manitoba demands urgent attention. With record-low enrollment in paramedic programs, prolonged ambulance response times, increased violence towards paramedics and alarming vacancy rates, our healthcare system is at a critical juncture.

...

We seek concrete plans to enhance paramedic working conditions, attract more students to the field, and ensure timely and proficient emergency medical assistance in all parts of this province.

...

Questions:

- How does your party intend to ensure sufficient paramedic staffing across the entire province?
- In what ways will your party contribute to enhancing and promoting paramedic education and training?
- What strategies will your party implement to decrease instances of violence against first responders?
- How does your party plan to provide comprehensive support for the mental health of paramedics?

Your commitment to improving the lives of paramedics is a commitment to the well-being of all Manitobans. We look forward to hearing your detailed proposals on how your party intends to secure a safer, healthier future for our province through better paramedic services.”

GPM RESPONSE:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questionnaire! We begin by referring you to our *Health & Healthcare Foundation Policy* (greenparty.mb.ca). In it we emphasize an upstream, proactive approach to health and healthcare, notably by recognizing the social determinants of health, with a focus on addressing poverty through a Basic Income Guarantee. Additionally, we must do this in the context of the Climate Emergency which has already and will put increasing pressure on Manitobans' health and on our healthcare system. By looking at upstream solutions, we envision the load on our healthcare system decreasing, with much smaller backlogs and less stress on our healthcare professionals. We recommend a Citizens Assembly on Health & Healthcare, seeking input and continual feedback from health professionals, academics, lay persons and members of the Indigenous community.

With specific reference to paramedic services, our government and society in general must first and foremost better recognize the profound importance of the life-and-death services you provide us.

Q1: We need to begin by strongly advocating for a respectful and continually improving level of communication between our healthcare professionals and government. Over the years, we have seen, with much concern, a steady deterioration in such communication. We would look to regular, open and effective communication to help assess the needs and address gaps in staffing levels across the province. With timely consultation with your professional association, we would ensure that gaps be addressed and staffing levels comparable to other jurisdictions be improved and maintained.

Q2: In a similar manner as in Q1, we would work closely with your association to ensure education and training be available for paramedic professionals. We would advocate for a level of continuing education prescribed by your association and provide this as part of remuneration and compensation, as an obvious investment in ensuring the highest quality of service and in retaining you, our valued paramedic professionals.

Q3: We would begin with better understanding the severity of the problem of violence against first-responders - which we suspect is much worse than that generally understood by the public. We would listen to suggestions from you and be open to all ideas. Unless contraindicated, we would follow this by advocating for the development of a public awareness program, through various forms of media, to educate the general public on this challenge. We would push for a "zero tolerance" policy, to better protect our first responders and look at the means to have police accompany paramedics in particularly hazardous situations.

Q4: Unfortunately, in general, mental health and well-being has for the longest time not received the attention it requires. This needs to significantly change and certainly for our healthcare professionals, including you, our paramedics. We would again look to your association for guidance but could envision implementing supplementary resources to address heightened pressures on your mental health.

Thank you again for inviting us to participate, please contact us if we can provide more information at info@greenparty.mb.ca