

Hello Rebecca,

My name is Donnan McKenna and I am the Keystone Party Candidate for Swan River. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the issues that you have identified.

I've worked 30 years as a police officer alongside allied service providers in the Paramedic profession. I know first hand the level of stress experienced when First Responders are expected to do more with less. They serve large areas and wait longer in backed up ER's to deliver their patients into the care of the facility, all the while knowing that more people are waiting for attention. System inefficiencies combined with staff shortages make the situation untenable.

That places an incredible amount of workplace stress on the people who do their job from a position of caring for others. This is all too common and very often not taken into consideration by policy makers who forget that first responders are humans not machines. Experiencing human crisis, injury and death shift after shift takes a toll and services for them must be made available.

Paramedics need a reprieve to deal with workplace trauma/stress and should be able to step away to work in a less acute crisis environment so that they can refresh and carry on doing what they love to do. These solutions must come from the 'boots on the ground' so to speak. Rotating shift schedules with reprieves from emergency service to designated stable patient transfers or administrative duties may be part of the solution. Staffing levels and shortages must be taken into consideration so as to not leave coverage lacking as this exacerbates the present problem.

De-centralization of services is one step in addressing the issues that paramedics face as serving in a large centre has different challenges than serving in a rural area. Empowering front line workers so that they can address issues that they are facing will be a positive step forward.

Continuous education and mental health, quality of work/life balance, ongoing programming must also meet the needs of the paramedics without infringing on personal time off.

Recruitment, training and retention are issues that require a commitment from the government. This commitment includes adequate staffing, incentives for staff to stay in the field and support for education and ongoing training. The Keystone party is committed to providing robust health care services for all Manitobans.

Police and paramedics are frequently called to attend when people are in a mental health crisis or when they are under the influence of illicit substances, this creates pressures on several systems. Presently the pressure on the system and the personnel delivering services is very high.

There are a number of actions that can be taken to alleviate the pressures on healthcare as a whole, any changes made have to be done in consultation with those providing the services. The expansion of pharmacists authority to diagnose and treat minor and specific ailments would reduce the pressure on emergency rooms and walk-in clinics. The dispensing of non intoxicating methadone by pharmacies and

mobile dispensaries will support addiction recovery and reduce pressure on emergency rooms and hospitals. The creation of partnerships between allied professionals to address the issues needs to be done. I oversaw and expanded the PACT (Police and Crisis Teams) in Grande Prairie which addressed many of these issues. A PACT team pairs a police officer with enhanced training with a psychiatric nurse. These teams respond regionally to those suffering mental health issues and requiring police intervention. The psychiatric nurse is better able to navigate the HealthCare system and can access the appropriate medical practitioner avoiding long waits in emergency rooms and freeing up paramedic service. PACT further navigates those with mental health challenges away from the Justice system. Expanded interoperability with Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that deal specifically with addiction will provide better access for those with addiction issues. These small steps do not require large expenditures and will relieve pressure on healthcare and those providing the service. Violence against first responders is a growing problem and is oftentimes associated with addiction and mental health issues. In my area, repeat hospital stays for mental health and substance abuse are above the National and Provincial averages. It is 14.5% in Prairie Mountain, 13.1% in Manitoba and 13.5% nationally. Making some system changes will direct clients more appropriately and reduce violent incidents as well as free up the healthcare system.

We are the Party that will put people first and prioritize health, education and safety. The systems that are fundamentally important to Manitobans.

If you have any questions or require anything further, please feel free to contact the writer.

Yours Truly

Donnan McKenna