



Sept. 7, 2023

Brent Bekiaris, Chair
Paramedic Association of Manitoba
MAILING ADDRESS
C/O rclifton@paramedicsofmanitoba.ca

Dear Mr. Bekiaris,

Thank you for engaging in this critical election. The Manitoba NDP, led by Wab Kinew, fully support paramedics. We will ensure you are paid fairly for your invaluable service, and won't make any changes to the way paramedics are hired. We want to fill vacancies and improve working conditions for paramedics to ensure your safety on the job.

Healthcare crisis

We agree that the healthcare system is in crisis. After seven years of cuts under the Pallister-Stefanson government, Manitoba has record-low enrolment in paramedic programs, prolonged ambulance response times, lack of opportunities for upward mobility, alarming vacancy rates and increasing workplace violence against paramedics.

We understand that one of the most frustrating experiences for paramedics is when you're stuck in the ambulance bay. As a result of Heather Stefanson's cuts to healthcare, our hospitals are overcrowded. The Manitoba NDP has committed to a phased approach to build three new emergency rooms in Winnipeg to replace the ERs Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson closed. We will also build a new ER in Eriksdale to improve health care for families in rural Manitoba and reduce travel times for rural paramedics.

In response to your questions:

How does your party intend to ensure sufficient paramedic staffing across the entire province?

If we have the opportunity to form government, the Manitoba NDP will set to work immediately to replace the nearly 100 paramedics cut by Heather Stefanson since 2019 - and work to add 100 more over the next four years. Hiring more paramedics will reduce stress on existing paramedics, allow for a better work-life balance, reduce burnout, and improve ambulance wait times for patients.

We will also allow paramedics to work to your full scope of practice so you can properly exercise your skills.

In what ways will your party contribute to enhancing and promoting paramedic education and training?

The Manitoba NDP knows that education and training will play an essential role in ending the healthcare staffing crisis. We will invest in expanding paramedic training and ensure you have the tools you need to help patients when time is of the essence. We will also ensure paramedics can access training on de-escalation for challenging situations.

Many paramedics have advanced skills and training that could help take pressure off other levels of the healthcare system. We will ensure paramedics can work to your full scope of practice and provide proper care across the province. Removing restrictions on scope of practice will help make education at Red River College Polytechnic and other post-secondary institutions more attractive so we can tackle the paramedic shortage.

What strategies will your party implement to decrease instances of violence against first responders?

The smart way to reduce crime and make communities safer is to fund law enforcement while also addressing root causes like poverty, mental health, lack of housing and addictions.

For years the PC Party has failed to hire institutional safety officers in health facilities even though they have the legal power to do so. Paramedics are sometimes called to incidents that are known to involve violence, but that information isn't always available to paramedics. The Manitoba NDP will work with paramedics and law enforcement to improve communications when there is a risk of violence. Paramedics have a right to know that they are dealing with potentially dangerous situations.

The Manitoba NDP will also work with paramedics and law enforcement to ensure paramedics are not sent to dangerous situations alone and have support when transporting patients.

How does your party plan to provide comprehensive support for the mental health of paramedics?

The Manitoba NDP will work with paramedics to develop a mental-health program staffed with specialists, including a psychologist, who will understand the specific and unique challenges of paramedics. We are committed to improving workplace health and safety and that includes supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our frontline workers. Our plan will help take care of the workers that care for Manitobans.

Once again, we thank you for reaching out to us and for engaging in this election. We look forward to working with you to improve the lives of paramedics and improve the healthcare system for all Manitoba families.

Sincerely,

The Manitoba NDP