



Paramedic Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
PO Box 8086
St John's, NL
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November 19, 2015

Dear members of the PANL Executive,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the perspective of the New Democratic Party to your organization and the members you represent.

Front line workers, including first responders such as paramedics, are the backbone of our healthcare system. Despite this reality, these workers are often not involved in the decision-making process for healthcare policies. The NDP is committed to consulting with front line workers directly in an effort to improve the system – not only for patients, but for the people providing this service.

Our party has been a strong advocate for Paramedics. On the issue of Red Alerts, in the past year we have stood on the steps of Confederation Building and on the street corners of St. John's in solidarity with paramedics on this crucial issue.

When every second counts, paramedics are the first on the scene to assess, treat, care, and transport. The NDP fully understands your importance to our province and to our health care system.

If you would like to discuss these matters further at any point, please do not hesitate to contact us.

What are your party's thoughts on the best way to deliver pre-hospital care in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Our current patchwork ambulance system has resulted in disparate wages, working conditions and levels of service across the province. The NDP is committed to transitioning to a single, province-wide, publicly-administered ambulance system with better wages and working conditions, and improved services.

Is your party committed to seeing that all the recommendations outlined in the Fitch Ambulance Report are completed in a timely manner according to the time lines that were set out in the report?

The Fitch Report made a number of recommendations for more effective patient transfer and care. Yet almost three years later, little has been done, and this year's budget showed no new funding for ambulance services – including no funding for a new centralized dispatch system, which was promised but not delivered. We are committed to ensuring that the Fitch Ambulance Report recommendations are implemented according to the timelines laid out in the Report.

More recently, the government and Eastern Health have released the Pomax Report. The report outlines a series of changes to the Paramedicine and Medical Transport system for Eastern Health. The comprehensive report makes a series of recommendations to improve response time and provide proper equipment, and logistical and managerial supports. The report recommends a cash infusion of approximately \$40 million over a five year period. The NDP supports the recommendations of the report, which takes into account the perspectives of front line paramedicine workers.

Is your party committed to recognizing the EMS profession as an essential service, where it has never been before?

The skills involved in first response, assessment, intervention and safe transport of patients are important to our health care system. We would therefore like to see all EMS professionals within that system with the designation of essential as appropriate.

The NDP always has, and will continue to, supported workers' ability to exercise their Charter rights to free assembly and to strike.

What is your party's stance on providing compensation for workers who have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

Front line health care workers often face traumatic and highly stressful situations. This is especially true for first responders; a 2012 study on Ottawa emergency

service workers found that paramedics were at the highest risk of developing PTSD. Tema Conter Memorial Trust, a foundation that advocates for better mental-health support for emergency service workers estimates that 16 to 24 percent of Canadian paramedics will be diagnosed with PTSD at some point in their careers.

The impact that a specific incident can have on front line emergency personnel is difficult to measure, and we recognize that PTSD can develop over time. Support systems must be put into place to ensure that these workers – that all workers – have access to the help, counselling, peer support, etc., that they require to adequately deal with their mental state. Workplace programs and peer support networks must be put into place to not only help with PTSD but also to end the stigma around mental health issues in the workplace.

Despite the realities laid out above and the growing literature and awareness given to the subject of PTSD, our workplace compensation legislation only recognizes stress that is “an acute reaction to a sudden and unexpected traumatic event.” This should be reviewed. Other jurisdictions now allow first responders to qualify for compensation without having to connect their PTSD to a particular incident at work, and the NDP supports a presumptive clause for first responders who are diagnosed with PTSD.

Is your party committed to seeing that EMS personnel are seen and treated as health care professionals that are a vital part of the health care sector?

EMS personnel are an essential part of our health care system and should be included within it. A central administrative agency combined with EMS legislation would go far in recognizing these professionals, lowering turnover rates and stabilizing the ambulance sector overall.

Sincerely,



Earle McCurdy
Leader, NL NDP