



RESPONSE TO MANITOBA PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SURVEY

Q: Which of the Peachy and Virgo recommendations regarding access to mental health and addictions services are priorities of the NDP?

Peachy himself was clear: “if mental health gets failed, then I think the whole plan gets failed”. We are committed to improving access to mental health and addictions services for Manitobans across the province. As a top priority, we will transform mental health and addictions care for Manitobans, starting by appointing a Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions. We need to properly address mental health and addictions as a central and freestanding component of the health care system. We believe this ministry will raise the profile, importance and attention these issues deserve. And we believe an independent ministry will be able to create connections across services that have previously been siloed and separated by different departmental and institutional barriers. It is clear from many different reports that seamless transitions between care providers and care givers is necessary in order to properly deliver mental health and addictions services for service providers and patients. This ministry will shape process and address these longstanding challenges. It will also create more transparency around the level of investment and programming available for mental health and addictions in our province. Finally, it will allow for greater specialization to address mental health and addictions challenges that different communities – be it urban Indigenous communities or rural and remote communities – face.

In terms of addressing the recommendations of reports, we know new models of care are needed to modernize service delivery and better supports patients and families. We will immediately invest in better mental health supports at community clinics and ACCESS centres, creating new community-based mental health services, doubling the number of counsellors in ACCESS Centres, working with the Federal Government to fund some eligible mental health costs for families. We are also committed to investing in prevention services

and supports for children and youth in the community in order to best address mental health challenges before they arise.

With respect to addictions, we believe it is important and scientifically supported to open a safe consumption site in downtown Winnipeg to address the addictions and public health crisis that have arisen as a result of meth. Furthermore, we believe investments in detox beds, transitional housing, programming like a managed alcohol program, medically assisted supports and social supports will make a measurable and critical impact on improving outcomes of people with addictions in our province.

The Pallister government has slashed funding to both mental health and addiction services across the province. We know that the issue of mental health and addictions is complex. Underlying the mental health epidemic in the North is poverty and lower socio-economic status. Poverty leads to poor living conditions, poor nutrition, and a lack of resources- all of which puts stress on a child and contributes to mental health. Manitoba has the highest child poverty rates in the country, and those rates are highest in the North.

In our platform we also acknowledge the social determinants of health and commit to improving Rent Assist by reversing cuts made by Pallister; improving EIA rates; restoring the Getting Started benefit; and beginning to transform EIA into a basic income by eliminating the “welfare wall” as a disincentive to work; and striking a task force on both a basic income and a dignified income for people with severe and prolonged disabilities.

Question 2: What is your party's view on this recommendation (to increase the number of psychologists to be closer to the national average)? What does your party plan to do to address this shortage?

We believe that clinical psychologists should be trained at the appropriate level and be integrated into team-based care. We believe there needs to be an increase in the number of mental health counsellors, nurses, and social workers with additional training in mental health and addiction services. That is why, in our platform, we committed to hiring more nurses to address the gaps that have been caused by budgetary cuts ordered by the Pallister PCs. What's more we know ongoing training and professional development is a key component for all staff to be able to deliver the appropriate level of care in an ever changing environment.

We will make use of return of service agreements and other measures to increase the number of doctors and psychologists in Manitoba in order to address the shortage of these specialized service providers in our province. Our goal is to achieve the national average as soon as possible.

Question 3: How does your party plan to address the significant barriers that exist for Manitobans in accessing psychological and mental health services?

First and foremost, we will end Pallister's rushed and reckless cuts. We will reopen ERs and open more acute beds. We will end the chaos in health care by listening to the workers on the front lines and patients accessing services.

Some of the most significant barriers to accessing psychological services stem from stigma and social deficits that exist outside of the medical system. Communities that experience poverty and marginalization face barriers to accessing psychological and mental health services. That's why we are committed to reducing the incidence and depth of poverty by reversing cuts to important programs like Rent Assist. We are also committed to investing in social and affordable housing so all Manitobans have safe and secure places to live. And we will work to reform the child welfare system so children can remain with their families in their home communities in order to have the best possible start in life.

More broadly, we will work with the Federal Government to cover some eligible costs associated with mental health services so that families can access the services they need, when and where they need it. Finally we will move to provide more information and education to families and community members so that their knowledge of psychological and mental health services that are available becomes more widespread and better understood. These measures combined will help reduce barriers to access.