

Green Party of Manitoba Response to Canadian Pediatrics Society Questionnaire

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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 child and youth health, our government and society in general must first and foremost better recognize the profound importance of the life-and-death services you provide us as pediatricians.

Q1 *Strengthening child and youth mental health*

Publicly funded mental health services for children and youth are essential and have sadly been neglected over the past many years. We anticipate needing to significantly increase the provincial budget for such services. To assist in this assessment, we would advocate for a Citizens Assembly to better determine our needs, involving both experts in the field and members of the lay public. We would also advocate for public communications programs to inform the general public about the importance of such programs and to direct families in need of those services.

As we describe in Q#3, poverty is one of the most significant predictors of physical and mental health. Addressing poverty through a Basic Income Guarantee is a key part of our upstream approach to health. Increasing mental support services available for young people, especially in their schools is very important. We must also increase funding to community organizations to provide opportunities for children and youth in vulnerable neighborhoods with life-enriching opportunities, including sports, arts, music, culture, reading, homework and mentoring. Additionally, and rarely mentioned by our elected officials, is the impact of social media and "24/7 access to everything", on both

youth and adults. We would work toward introducing policies that would reduce non-essential access to such systems/platforms in school settings, and encourage adults that reducing “screen time” at home would be beneficial for all family members.

Q2 Improving immunization coverage

The Green Party of MB would advocate for funding more public school nurses, especially in vulnerable communities, both to administer immunizations but also to help with other student health concerns as well as education of staff and students. We recommend a comprehensive public education program be developed, especially aimed at parents with the goal of better informing them of the importance of immunization, for both themselves and their children. As far too many adults make immunization decisions based on blatantly false or faulty information, we would recommend working with community organizations and our public libraries to help develop and host a comprehensive public outreach program throughout the province.

Q3 Tackling childhood poverty

Poverty is one of the fundamental social determinants of health - physical and mental health - and recognized for decades as an important predictor of positive educational and health outcomes. Sadly Manitoba has one of the highest - if not ***the highest*** - rates of childhood poverty in the country. One of the longstanding platform cornerstones of the Green Party of Manitoba has been advocating for a Basic Income Guarantee. Basic Income has been shown both here through the MINCOME project in Dauphin MB in the 1970s and internationally since then as an effective approach to addressing poverty. A Basic Income would provide Manitoba families with a dignified and stable means to pay rent/mortgage, provide food, and purchase necessities for themselves and their children. In turn, this would proactively address homelessness, substance use (addiction) and crime, as well as negative educational and health outcomes. In addition, we fully support a universal nutrition program for children in public schools and advocate for free public transit throughout the province.

Q4 Increasing educational supports

The pandemic has unquestionably disrupted the learning trajectories and educational supports available for children around the world in the most profound of ways. Manitoba students are no exception and our schools and parents are still trying to recover. The Green Party of Manitoba advocates for significantly increasing funding for public schools in our province, especially for students in more vulnerable areas such as inner city Winnipeg and northern communities. This includes increasing funding for teachers and educational assistants, for counsellors and school psychologists, for facilities and materials, and for staffing of school libraries. In addition, we feel strongly that public libraries throughout the province are crucial resources for both children and adults. In

Winnipeg for example, only approximately 7% of the City Public Libraries' annual budget was funded directly by the provincial government; we recommend that increase to at least 20%. We would also aim to providing free Internet access to families in need, to ensure their children are not left behind.

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