



The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) believes that strengthening child and youth mental health, improving immunization coverage, tackling childhood poverty, and increasing educational supports are key for the health and wellness of children and youth in Manitoba. With the 2023 provincial election quickly approaching, the CPS would like to know how your party plans to address these priority issues. We would appreciate your responses be sent to [samanthag@cps.ca](mailto:samanthag@cps.ca) by Friday September 22nd for sharing with our membership of paediatric experts across the province.

### **Strengthening Child and Youth Mental Health**

What will your party do to improve timely access to publicly funded mental health services for children and youth?

*First we need to focus on diversion and prevention. Making investments in mental health are preventative because the lack of proper mental health services in Manitoba results in people going untreated, resulting in crisis costs in healthcare. Manitoba Liberals have committed to putting psychotherapy/mental health coverage under medicare, which would mean that patients would be able to see a registered psychologist free of charge. This commitment relies on the approach of prevention, in terms of catching and treating mental illnesses early.*

*We also need to make sure there are enough qualified and registered therapists to fill desperately needed vacancies. Manitoba has the lowest number of psychologists per capita across the country. A Manitoba Liberal government will fill these critical shortages that were neglected under successive NDP and PC governments by investing in the University of Manitoba's Department of Psychology and other post-secondary institutions to expand training, including instituting a new PsyD program to graduate more psychologists.*

*Ensuring that each school is staffed with a mental health professional is another key policy we would like to work towards to ensure better access for children and youth.*

## **Improving Immunization Coverage**

What will your party do to improve immunization coverage rates and protect against a rise in vaccine-preventable diseases?

*As a public health measure, decades of evidence shows that vaccines are effective at preventing infections, hospitalizations, preventable disabilities, and death. There are certainly individuals who cannot be vaccinated for health reasons and who depend on others being vaccinated to stay safe. We would prefer that people willingly engaged in vaccination, but in certain cases where health risks or illness or death are too high, vaccination should be mandatory. Manitoba Liberals support evidence-based education programs to promote better awareness of the importance of vaccination while at the same time combatting misinformation campaigns.*

## **Tackling Childhood Poverty**

What will your party do to reduce rates of childhood poverty and food insecurity?

*We are committed to a full suite of measures to address poverty in Manitoba – reducing costs to make life more affordable, while investing in Manitoba jobs and growth, including better social assistance, all with the goal of lifting people out of poverty – and out of crisis.*

*To help families with the cost of living and ensure that no child ever starts the school day hungry, we will implement a universal K-12 nutrition program. We recognize that this is one of the most significant ways we can address*

*not only day-to-day food insecurity and childhood development, but also relief for families with the rising cost of groceries.*

### **Increasing educational supports**

How will your party increase access to school-based developmental and educational supports and help children and youth recover from the learning losses and educational disruptions of the pandemic?

*Manitoba Liberals have a plan to invest in education so that every student reaches their full potential. Our first priority is ensuring stable and adequate funding to make sure the system has resources to support all students.*

*To address student well-being, a Manitoba Liberal government will implement the full screening of children for disabilities that might affect their learning – eyesight, hearing, and cognitive tests, to ensure interventions and supports are put in place to address and overcome deficits as soon as possible. Emerging from the pandemic, we recognize that a successful public education system means ensuring that the right models of education are available and accessible to students who feel that traditional learning models may not fully resonate with them.*

*Manitoba Liberals will work with school divisions to identify and implement more successful alternative learning models such as the MET School program, which provides more time for students outside of a school building and more learning from experts in the community.*