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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LIBERALS PROPOSE PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS: BOKHARI
Manitoba Psychological Society endorses Liberal plan to address mental health issues

Winnipeg, Manitoba – Unveiling the first plank in the Liberal platform for a Healthier Manitoba, Liberal Leader Rana Bokhari noted, “We all know someone who experiences mental health issues on a daily basis. Whether it is a parent, a child, a sibling or a friend – mental health issues affect us all.”

Bokhari continued, “With one in five Canadians, and one in seven children, suffering from mental health issues, we cannot afford to remain last among the provinces when it comes to accessing mental health care specialists.”

The first part of the Liberal Plan would see psychologists across the province funded in a similar way to physicians. Critical priority areas such as services for children, pregnant women and individuals with depression and PTSD would be covered by Medicare.

“We usually visit our doctor for a checkup when something isn’t right physically and under our plan Manitobans will be able to see a psychologist if they are dealing with mental health issues,” stated Bokhari.

“As part of listing mental health services as covered by Medicare, we will strike a task force of mental health professionals in Manitoba who will assist us to evaluate the outcomes of the program.” Bokhari noted that “Comprehensive evaluation, monitoring and oversight will ensure that services are improving and Manitobans get value for their investment.”

The second part of the Liberal Plan would see a steady increase in funding for hiring and retaining more psychologists in Manitoba. We will invest \$20 Million over four years to train, recruit and retain new psychologists in Manitoba. These investments will lower the psychologist to patient ratio, as well as bring young, skilled professionals into Manitoba. A portion of these new dollars would be specifically earmarked for rural and remote communities.

Bokhari noted that, “Investing proactively to ensure that Manitobans have greater access to psychologists is a practical solution for ensuring a healthier Manitoba and reducing health care costs at the crisis and urgent care stage. By providing Manitobans with the resources to access mental health professionals early, Manitoba will be more productive and the system will be better able to handle urgent situations as they arise.”

“Access to a psychologist is very limited here in Manitoba. Waitlists are long within the public health care system, and insurance coverage is minimal,” says Dr. Andrea Piotrowski, President of the Manitoba Psychological Society. “There is considerable evidence that psychological treatments are cost and clinically effective. If implemented, today’s announcement will ensure that Manitobans receive the care that they need.”

BACKGROUND

According to The Canadian Mental Health Association and Mood Disorders Canada, one in five Canadians and one in seven children suffer from mental health issues.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has estimated that the lifetime cost of untreated childhood mental disorders is \$200B. Preventing conduct disorder in one child yields a lifetime savings of \$280,000. Research has shown that:

- When mental health counseling services are available, users either utilize fewer or actually decrease their use of medical and hospital costs
- RCMP in Manitoba respond to on average 4573 calls a year related to mental illness since 2009. This number is growing each year.
- Mental health conditions are the 5th most common cause of death.
- Almost 70% of adults with mental health condition started to demonstrate symptoms by age 15
- The national average for psychologists to individuals 47 per 100,000.
- Manitoba's average for psychologists to individuals is 20 per 100,000.

CONTACT

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