

Tabled during
Committee of the Whole House
for Bill 102 An Act to Amend
the Workers Compensation Board

by J. Fox

emul
05-12-17



September 27, 2017

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to formally document our support for legislation that would compensate workers in Prince Edward Island that have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It's important that all workers are included in this piece of legislation and not just the higher risk groups like Police, Fire, Paramedics, etc.

Island EMS is committed to working with all levels of government and health organizations within Prince Edward Island to get this legislation in place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darcy Clinton", is written over a horizontal line.

Darcy Clinton
Paramedic Chief/GM
Island EMS



September 28, 2017

To Whom it may concern,

As the professional voice of Paramedics on PEI, the Paramedic Association of PEI (PAPEI) endeavors to advance and further develop the skills and expertise of our profession. However, ensuring the advancement of our profession means nothing if Paramedics are continually exiting the workforce earlier than necessary due to mental health concerns brought on by Occupation Stress Injuries (OSI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

PAPEI wholeheartedly supports the CUPE Local 3324 efforts to see presumptive PTSD legislation enacted here on PEI that would cover not only Paramedics and other First Responders, but any worker with a diagnosis of either OSI or PTSD. We agree with Local 3324 in that the current WCB framework, while allowing for PTSD coverage, still places a heavy burden of proof on the worker to justify the connection between the condition and the workplace. Presumptive PTSD legislation is present in other provincial jurisdictions within Canada and should be adopted on PEI to afford any worker afflicted with a diagnosed OSI or PTSD the protection needed to recover and rejoin the workforce.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. O'Meara".

Ryan O'Meara, ACP

President

Paramedic Association of Prince Edward Island

Marilyn F. Webb M.Ed. CCC

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In the last few years Local 3324 have been lobbying our government to bring in legislation similar to Manitoba that would protect and compensate workers in P.E.I. who have been diagnosed with PTSD. I thank you for reading my letter of support for this very important lobbying.

Mental health injuries will never be prevented for first responders, but stigma can change, and services can improve. The Manitoba decision saw the Worker's Compensation Board presume the condition of PTST was caused by the job unless proven otherwise. The Manitoba decision thus made it much easier to access compensation and treatment in a time sensitive fashion which is all important to healing and recovery.

I am a therapist in private practice. I have been seeing over the last seven years, most of the paramedics and dispatchers who work with IEMS, when they access their EAP provider Ceridian Lifeworks. It is a sincere privilege to meet these first responders and I am truly humbled to serve the people who do a job most of us might say, we could not. I am always left feeling how graced we are as a community to have these people who if we end up on their stretchers; we would be so very well served. I have met wonderful paramedics who are veterans of 20-30 years service and many new medics directly out of Holland College .I feel that same privilege when I see a dispatcher that should we have to call EMS, I know there is a calm and confident voice in our time of crisis.

I have an excellent relationship with the management and staff of Island EMS. I have not met a single responder who does not say they have an excellent management team. Darcy Clinton as GM and his managers are extremely proactive in having their members' access therapy services, after tragedies and hard calls, and also in general to help mitigate the extreme cumulative stress that first responder's face over a long career.

Supportive management and quick access to therapy services works well, except when occasionally clients are in need of much more treatment than their Eap sessions. It is then very sad to see those who literally save our lives or lives of family members, not being able to assess good long term help when needed .We say Cancer affects the lives of all Islanders or their families. It is equally true that first line responders touch all our lives and sometimes at the most critical moments. To see first responders at their critical times not have access to benefits and treatment is an issue that needs our collective serious attention.

TEMA is an extremely hard working Canadian fundraising group that each year assists many first responders with funds for treatment. Sadly the demand for funds across Canada is often more than they can meet and this group fundraise tirelessly.

Responders do go on to use their Blue Cross benefits after EAP sessions and can access some excellent psychologists well trained in PTSD and also occupational therapists in the province .The difficulties that arise however are very considerable. The wait list can be several months to a year in general, due to the shortage of psychologists in the province and the case loads they all carry. Serene View Ranch is a phenomenal private facility specializing in treatment for first responders in the province. Carolyn LeBlanc will never turn down a first responder and yet wait times are the biggest challenge for them.

The wait list for a psychiatrist we know can be extremely long. I have sadly seen one medic who is just this month, seeing a psychiatrist and it have been two years. While the province funds psychiatry, Blue Cross funds run out very quickly when responders see a psychologist. Diagnosis is made finally after long waits, but then treatment is sometimes far too limited by funds.

What happens is responders keep working because of the necessity of financial and family considerations, when they do not have benefits or cannot get into treatment. Being off work with benefits cannot happen without a medical diagnosis and if the person is still on a wait list, we have a very serious situation indeed. Workers are forced to try to keep going when they need to have time to recover.

There is now also an excellent peer support team and a peer support group at IEMS. The organization is very aware of the importance of grassroots involvement and has provided training for peer support. Caring medics who genuinely want to help their co- workers lead the movement to provide this service. In essence again ,all this works well, until sometimes it does not, and people who are too mentally injured on the job and need to be off work with benefits cannot access formal diagnosis and thus more specialized professional treatment services.

Each year there is a large conference held on the Island organized by the very hard working Paramedics Association. The Paramedics Association is very strong here, and they bring in excellent psychologists, psychiatrists, and injured and healing responders as speakers. These events are highly informative around self care, PTSD and other operational injuries. This event is also attended by fire fighters, police, therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and RCMP. This year two of the speakers were a dispatcher on duty and an officer's widow, both of whom developed PTSD after the murders of 3 RCMP officers in Moncton in 2015. There are incidents of such critical nature, where work place injury will absolutely happen and could happen to any first responder or their family member. As well we know that cumulative stress of being involved in many tragedies can result in PTSD.

As I stated these conferences are very educational for all attendees. There is great information on self care and therapy as preventive measures. It can be horrifying though, to hear each year first line responders from across Canada tell of their struggles to get help and stay alive financially when inevitably mental health injuries happen on the job. Largely gone are the days when first responders are resistant to help, the current situation is the resistance they face when trying to get help. One would only need to attend one of these events to be shocked into the reality that first responders like veterans, often live in our country unable to be assessed in a timely way, have benefits, and receive treatment. We hear of bankruptcies when responders cannot work. Each year we hear worse, the increasing statistics of suicides and mental injuries in all front line first responders across this country.

Manitoba has lead the way to providing legislation and changes that has greatly reduced the stigma of mental health injury , and greatly assisted people who need a diagnosis and benefits to heal and go forward serving us all. I like to hope that Prince Edward Island will become a leader as well. I do know our province is working hard to work with a country wide situation of problems in mental health services.

I thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Webb M.Ed CCC