

Paramedic Leadership, Advocacy and Best Practices for Nova Scotia Paramedic Association (NSPPA)

Includes:

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By: Maliha Mahjabeen, Yousuf Aftab Diwan, Hafsoh Omobolarin Aranseola

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Supervising Professor: Rob Elkington

Trent Community Research Centre Project Coordinator: Matthew Walmsley

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Suite 3.10, Trent University Student Centre

1600 West Bank Drive

Peterborough, ON K9L 0G2

Phone: [\(705\) 748-1093](tel:7057481093)

Email: tcrc@trentu.ca

Website: trentu.ca/tcrc

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Abstract

Paramedics in Nova Scotia face critical challenges, including staffing shortages, burnout, and low morale. Efforts such as international recruitment, tuition-free training programs, and mental health initiatives have been implemented to address these issues, but significant gaps remain. This research explores the role of paramedic associations in advocating for improved staffing, work-life balance, and mental health resources, while promoting recruitment and retention strategies.

The research draws on nine peer-reviewed journal articles, one book, one research paper, one report by the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), and one website to evaluate best practices and identify gaps in current approaches. Findings highlight the associations' critical role in enhancing job satisfaction, reducing stigma, and fostering a supportive professional culture.

The research underscores the importance of paramedic associations in tackling workforce challenges, offering evidence-based recommendations to refine their strategies and better support paramedics in overcoming current and future hurdles.

Keywords: Burnout, Mental Health, Retention, Strategies, Advocacy, Training, Workforce, Paramedics, Associations.

Introduction

In Nova Scotia, paramedics are facing significant challenges, with staffing shortages and burnout being prominent issues. Morale among paramedics is at an "all-time low," according to union leaders. The pressure has been mounting as paramedics work extended hours without adequate breaks, often feeling undervalued by both employers and the government. This has led to an increasing number of workers opting to leave the profession or reduce their hours, fearing they will face the same burnout as their colleagues (King,2024).

One of the key initiatives is the provision of free tuition for paramedics and emergency medical responders (EMRs) in the province. In 2024, Nova Scotia announced that it would fully cover the tuition costs for over 460 individuals training to become primary care paramedics or EMRs (Health and Wellness, 2024). In exchange for this financial support, paramedics are required to commit to working in the province for four years, while EMRs must serve for two years. This initiative, with an investment of \$5.94 million, is expected to train 150 primary care paramedics and 180 emergency medical responders, addressing both immediate staffing needs and future workforce sustainability (Nova Scotia Government, 2024).

Furthermore, the introduction of temporary licenses for paramedic graduates has helped mitigate staffing shortages. This policy allows graduates to work under the supervision of experienced paramedics while awaiting certification, expediting their integration into the workforce and addressing critical gaps in EMS (Healey, 2024). This policy has received positive feedback from industry leaders, who view it as a necessary step in balancing the workforce's demands and improving access to emergency care in the province (Healey, 2024).

Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain. High ambulance offload times and delays in patient transfers have become major concerns in Nova Scotia. Paramedics have reported spending up to 30% of their shifts waiting to offload patients at overcrowded hospitals, which impacts their ability to respond promptly to new emergencies (Gorman, 2023). These delays exacerbate the strain on paramedics, who already face significant demands and long hours. Moreover, while the government has increased funding for paramedics, the pay disparity between Nova Scotia and other provinces remains a pressing issue. Paramedics in Nova Scotia earn lower salaries compared to their counterparts in Ontario, which contributes to challenges in recruitment and retention (Willick, 2023). In response, the paramedic union has advocated for better pay and working conditions to ensure that Nova Scotia can attract and retain skilled professionals (CTV News, 2022).

The government's approach to addressing these challenges is multifaceted, including financial incentives, training initiatives, and policy changes aimed at improving workforce efficiency and support. However, as the union has pointed out, these measures need to be part of a more comprehensive strategy that includes ongoing support for the current workforce and sustainable solutions for long-term workforce stability (Willick, 2023).

This research is to investigate methods that the Nova Scotia Paramedic Professional Association (NSPPA) might use to address high paramedic turnover rates by looking at important aspects such as career advancement opportunities, job satisfaction, and mental health support. Through investigating emergency service associations' best practices, the research will pinpoint practical strategies for improving paramedic retention. It will analyze the relationship between job satisfaction and work-life balance, recognition, and workplace culture, as well as the potential contribution of the NSPPA to these advancements. The research will also assess how well career advancement programs—like mentorship and specialized training—promote professional development and how well peer support programs reduce psychological distress. The results will give the NSPPA actionable recommendations for bolstering its policies, programs, and advocacy initiatives to improve the retention and well-being of paramedics.

Methodology

This research employs a secondary research methodology to examine the professional development and support needs of paramedic personnel in Nova Scotia. The study focuses on identifying challenges and opportunities that can improve job satisfaction and retention. The selected sources include news articles, books, a research paper, a report by the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), and the website First Responders Mental Health Nova Scotia. These materials were chosen for their relevance to workforce issues, job satisfaction, professional development, and retention within the paramedic profession in Nova Scotia. Moreover, the resources provided valuable insights to address mental health challenges faced by first responders, particularly in managing traumatic stress injuries.

The data was analyzed using thematic synthesis to identify recurring themes, comparing findings across sources to identify commonalities, contradictions, or gaps. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring proper citation and adherence to privacy guidelines, while the research provides valuable insights into the current state of the paramedic workforce, highlighting areas for future growth and improvement.

Literature Review

Staffing shortages, growing demand, and operational challenges are putting more and more strain on Nova Scotia's paramedic services. Paramedic associations will be better able to assist and advocate for their members using the insights gathered from this research. By identifying significant problems like burnout, staff shortages, and mental health concerns, it will provide associations with useful information to address these challenges through targeted actions. The findings about professional development, peer support, and workplace culture will assist associations in creating successful programs that increase job satisfaction, foster career progress, and strengthen resilience. Better emergency healthcare services for communities and a healthier, more sustainable paramedic workforce will also be assured by the research, which will help associations strengthen their position as advocates for systemic changes.

The key themes covered in this literature review include addressing high turnover rates through increased job satisfaction and professional support, examining the effects of work-life balance, recognition, and workplace culture on paramedics' well-being, examining the impact of peer support programs on reducing psychological distress, and identifying specific contributions of the association to improving workplace conditions, mental health support, and career growth.

(i)Addressing Paramedic Burnout :“Burnout is more than one employee problem, its an organizational problem, that requires organizational solution”- Jennifer Moss’s insights are a powerful reminder that addressing burnout in professions like paramedics requires a holistic, systemic approach to improve working conditions and promote sustainable health and well-being(Moss 2021,p.3) .In her book “The Burnout Epidemic: The Rise of Chronic Stress and How We Can Fix It” she stated about how researchers Christina Maslach and her co-authors identified six primary factors that contribute to burnout, particularly in high-stress professions such as paramedicine. These include unmanageable workloads, where constant task overload and insufficient recovery time strain workers; lack of control, where individuals feel powerless in decision-making processes; insufficient reward, both in terms of recognition and financial compensation, leading to feelings of underappreciation; breakdowns in community, where poor team dynamics and a lack of support foster isolation; absence of fairness, where inequality in workload distribution or opportunities fosters resentment; and value conflict, where discrepancies between personal values and organizational demands generate internal tension.(Moss,2021)

As instances of high-stress professions vulnerable to burnout, Jennifer Moss emphasizes throughout the book the tremendous difficulties experienced by paramedics and other frontline healthcare workers. Moss talks about the high emotional and physical demands that paramedics face, such as being exposed to trauma, working long hours, having erratic schedules, and having to make life-saving decisions in trying circumstances. She highlights the structural causes of burnout in this field, including a lack of resources, insufficient support, and a culture that frequently ignores mental health needs. One important lesson is Moss's support for systemic rather than purely individual responses to burnout. In order to reduce chronic stress, she recommends that organizations that assist paramedics focus mental health services, create psychologically safe environments, and make structural adjustments. (Moss 2021)

(ii). Addressing Paramedic Retention Challenges: Recognition and Work-Life Balance in Crisis

Recognition for the critical role paramedics play in the healthcare system can also reduce turnover. Awards, public acknowledgment, and fostering a sense of community in the workplace help paramedics feel valued. Member Rob Groom of the Nova Scotia Paramedic Association (NSPA) stresses the importance of raising awareness about the diverse roles paramedics play in healthcare and the need for greater public and governmental support (Kevin Northup 2024).

Efforts to enhance workplace culture, including team-building initiatives and celebrating paramedics' contributions, are best practices observed in other associations. These measures cultivate pride and a sense of belonging, motivating paramedics to remain committed to their profession.

The demanding nature of paramedic work makes achieving work-life balance essential. Long shifts, frequent exposure to trauma, and physical exhaustion contribute to high levels of burnout. Flexible scheduling, mental health days, and supportive leave policies are effective strategies for addressing these challenges.

Furthermore, A 2023 National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) report highlighted that paramedics often face long hours and insufficient recovery time between shifts, leading to severe emotional exhaustion. Similarly, CBC News (2023) noted ongoing challenges with paramedics struggling to secure approved vacation time, further exacerbating burnout. Murray & Brown (2021) emphasize the importance of building better team relationships and addressing early signs of stress through programs like job shadowing, joint training, and stress management workshops (pp. 49-51). These initiatives reduce workplace conflict, improve morale, and foster a supportive environment. Addressing these challenges requires consistent application of work-life balance policies and an increase in staffing levels to reduce workloads.

The Nova Scotia Professional Paramedic Association (NSPPA) can advocate for these changes, particularly for paramedics in rural areas who face unique resource constraints. By prioritizing paramedics' well-being, these initiatives can create a healthier and more resilient workforce.

(iii) Tackling Job Satisfaction Issues: Pay Disparities and Overwork in Nova Scotia's Paramedic Sector

In Nova Scotia, paramedics' job satisfaction is greatly influenced by their pay, workload, and acceptance. Regardless of being among the most skilled paramedics in the entire continent, paramedics in Nova Scotia continue to receive lower pay than their counterparts in other regions, as noted by Kevin MacMullin, CEO of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 727 (CTV News, 2022). Many paramedics are departing for higher-paying jobs in other provinces as a result of this wage gap, which is causing the high turnover rates. One important step in resolving this discontent is to offer continuing care workers a pay increase comparable to the 23% hike that was recently granted. (CTV News, 2022)

Another significant factor influencing job satisfaction is overwork. Due to work-related injuries, short-term disabilities, or burnout, a sizable section of the workforce is currently on leave. This problem is made worse by insufficient staffing, which forces current paramedics to work additional shifts, which lowers morale and causes fatigue. In order to promote increased compensation, better working conditions, and acknowledgment of paramedics' contributions to the healthcare system, the Nova Scotia Paramedic

Association can be extremely effective. Reducing turnover and improving job satisfaction could be achieved by addressing these factors through initiatives for mental health support, improved shift management, and wage increases.

(iv) Fostering Career Growth and Professional Development for Paramedics in Nova Scotia

There are currently few opportunities for paramedics in Nova Scotia to advance in their careers, which adds to the feeling of stagnation in the field. According to the article, Advanced Care Paramedics in Nova Scotia make substantially less money than their counterparts in other provinces, such as Ontario, according to the provincial wage scale (CTV News, 2022). In addition to discouraging retention, this pay disparity has an impact on paramedics' desire to pursue more advanced positions or specializations. The first stage in creating a long-lasting professional pipeline is the implementation of a temporary licensing system that enables paramedic trainees to begin working earlier. The Nova Scotia Paramedic Association could promote career development by supporting organized career pathways, such as mentorship programs, leadership training, and specialized certifications, in addition to merely covering short-term shortages. Increasing cooperation with academic institutions may also give paramedics greater access to advanced training and continuing education. The association could contribute to the development of a more fulfilling and alluring work environment by providing incentives such as increased compensation for specialized roles and establishing a clear path for career advancement. (CTV News, 2022).

(v) Supporting Paramedics' Mental Health through Peer Programs and Structural Change

Mental health challenges are widespread among paramedics, with high rates of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and general psychological distress reported in the workforce (AHRQ, 2023). According to the findings of Price, Landry, et al. (2022), participants who tested positive for PTSD reported far lower levels of perceived mental health abilities, in particular mindfulness. This implies that the potential advantages of mental health services, such as Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), may be limited by the cognitive demands connected to mental health issues like PTSD. The results emphasize how crucial it is to include licensed mental health professionals in peer support groups and to set up explicit standard operating protocols for stepped-care referrals, including psychotherapy, in order to better assist people with PTSD. Peer support programs, such as Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), provide a platform for paramedics to share their experiences and build resilience in a supportive environment.

Programs like Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) are specifically designed to help paramedics cope with the psychological strain of their work. By sharing their experiences with peers who understand the demands of the job, paramedics can reduce feelings of isolation and improve their mental well-being. Management (CISM) programs reported better coping skills and reduced symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and anxiety. These programs are particularly valuable in high-stress professions like emergency services, where traditional mental health interventions may not address the unique challenges of the role.

Burnout and moral injury remain significant challenges for paramedics. A 2023 National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) report highlighted that high call volumes, extended shifts, and frequent exposure to traumatic events lead to physical and emotional exhaustion. Additionally, "hallway medicine," where paramedics care for patients in overcrowded hospitals, leaves many feelings unable to provide

adequate care. This often results in moral injury, further compounding psychological distress (Megan King & Rebecca Lau (2023)).

According to the website of Nova Scotia First Responders' Mental Health, a comprehensive strategy for promoting the mental health of Nova Scotia's first responders is provided through the "Don't Wear It, Share It" initiative. The program offers several pathways to emotional healing by integrating peer support, trauma-informed therapy, counseling, CISM debriefing, resiliency training, and continuing support. However, eliminating stigma, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining engagement with participants over time are all necessary for these therapy methods to be successful. The program doesn't address all of the structural problems that lead to paramedics' mental health difficulties. Even though it promotes emotional sharing and peer support, it does not specifically address the underlying causes of burnout, such as long shifts, inadequate personnel, or low pay.

While peer support programs like Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) provide valuable tools for immediate stress relief, systemic challenges such as staffing shortages and heavy workloads must also be addressed. Increasing staffing levels, reducing workloads, and ensuring sufficient recovery time are essential for creating a supportive environment where mental health programs can succeed.

Despite the widespread use of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) programs, questions remain about their long-term effectiveness. A review by AHRQ (2023) noted that many mental health interventions for paramedics lack rigorous evaluations. Without clear evidence, it is difficult to determine whether these programs truly reduce mental health disorders or simply provide short-term relief.

The Nova Scotia Professional Paramedic Association (NSPPA) can play a pivotal role in addressing this evidence gap by advocating for systematic evaluations of mental health programs tailored to Nova Scotia's unique needs. Effective programs can improve paramedics' psychological well-being while also enhancing job satisfaction and retention.

Discussion

The findings from the literature highlight the multifaceted challenges facing paramedics in Nova Scotia and suggest targeted strategies for addressing them. The discussion below synthesizes the literature to analyze these challenges and offers insights into how the Nova Scotia Paramedic Professional Association (NSPPA) can take a proactive role in mitigating these issues.

(i). Addressing Staffing Shortages and Workload Management

A core finding of the research is that paramedic burnout and job dissatisfaction in Nova Scotia are significantly influenced by staffing shortages. Longer shifts, increased pressure, and a higher likelihood of mistakes are all consequences of these shortages, and they all raise the risk of job discontent and declining morale. The overwhelming workload exacerbates physical and emotional fatigue among paramedics, leading to both mental and physical health issues. Reports from the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE, 2023) and CBC News (2023) emphasized the need for systemic solutions, such as flexible scheduling and improved work-life balance policies. Many paramedics in Nova Scotia claim that they struggle to take enough time off, which results in extended burnout. In addition to lowering job

satisfaction and affecting care quality, this burden and staffing shortages exacerbate the cycle of burnout and turnover. Nova Scotia Professional Paramedic Association (NSPPA) should advocate for an increase in staffing levels to ensure that paramedics are not overburdened. This can entail pushing for more funds for hiring and retention initiatives as well as legislation that would improve staffing ratios. Furthermore, promoting flexible shift arrangements that permit more personal time and respite in between shifts might aid in reducing some of the physical and emotional stress.

To build a sustainable workforce and raise job satisfaction of the paramedics, it is essential to address staffing shortages and enhance workload management and associations should advocate for systematic changes that ease the workload for paramedics, improving both performance and retention.

(ii). Enhancing Job Satisfaction through Recognition and Career Development

Job dissatisfaction among paramedics is fueled by a lack of recognition and career progression chances in addition to unfavorable working circumstances. When paramedics believe their abilities and talents are not acknowledged, they become frustrated and become less involved in their profession. Overwork and poor staffing levels further compound dissatisfaction. In Nova Scotia, the resulting physical and emotional exhaustion diminishes morale and productivity, reinforcing the need for systemic reforms in shift management and staffing policies (CTV News, 2024). The paramedic profession is demanding, and recognition can significantly influence job satisfaction. Positive work environments can be created through performance-based rewards, public recognition, and workplace celebrations of accomplishments. Paramedics are more motivated and dedicated to their work when they feel appreciated and acknowledged for their efforts. A key contributor to dissatisfaction is the lack of structured career advancement pathways. Because there are few prospects for professional advancement, paramedics sometimes find themselves in a stagnant position. Providing mentorship programs, leadership training, opportunities for additional education and specialty, and well-defined career ladders within paramedic services can all help address this. For example, advanced care paramedic (ACP) or critical care paramedic (CCP) positions could be rewarded with higher compensation or perks.

Paramedic morale can be raised by implementing recognition programs and developing clear, incentive-based career routes, which will increase job engagement and retention. Associations should endeavor to guarantee that paramedic organizations have good support and easy access to these alternatives.

(iii). Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being

The mental health of paramedics is a central issue highlighted in the research. A report of Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) stated that mental health challenges remain pervasive among paramedics including high-stress situations, leaving paramedics vulnerable to burnout, PTSD, and other mental health issues. One of the primary barriers to addressing mental health issues in the paramedic workforce is the stigma surrounding mental health care. Many paramedics fear that seeking support will be seen as a weakness or will affect their career progression. This leads to a culture of silence, where paramedics struggle in isolation with their mental health challenges. Associations can lead the charge in promoting mental health awareness and the implementation of peer support networks. Programs like the "Don't Wear It, Share It" campaign in Nova Scotia, focuses on breaking the stigma surrounding mental health, are vital in ensuring paramedics feel comfortable accessing support. Additionally, expanding access

to confidential mental health services, such as counseling and debriefing sessions, can significantly improve psychological outcomes. In parallel with peer support programs, paramedic associations in Nova Scotia should advocate for workplace policies that prioritize mental health. This could include regular mental health check-ins, stress management workshops, and the integration of mental health professionals into paramedic teams to provide ongoing support.

Addressing mental health requires a multi-faceted approach, including stigma reduction, peer support, and institutional policies that prioritize mental well-being. Associations in Nova Scotia must lead these efforts to ensure paramedics receive the care and support they need to thrive both personally and professionally.

(iv). Advocacy for Systemic Change

The research emphasizes how important paramedic associations are in promoting systematic changes that impact the working conditions of paramedics. Advocacy efforts must be organized to address issues like low pay, inadequate financing, and a lack of government support for paramedic services. Paramedics in Nova Scotia often face wage disparities compared to their counterparts in other provinces, which affects both recruitment and retention. Associations can assist in addressing this disparity by promoting competitive pay and more funding for paramedic services, guaranteeing that paramedics receive fair compensation for the high degree of expertise and commitment needed for their jobs.

In order to win legislative reforms that benefit paramedics, associations must collaborate closely with the federal, provincial, and local governments. This entails promoting better benefits, working conditions, and laws that protect paramedics' health and safety. Furthermore, advocating for increased financing for paramedic services can guarantee that paramedics have the tools and resources necessary to deliver high-quality care. Addressing the underlying causes of paramedic discontent and turnover requires advocating for systemic change, such as pay raises, increased budget, and strengthened legislative backing. To guarantee the long-term viability of paramedic services, associations must take the lead in these initiatives.

The literature reveals that Nova Scotia's paramedic workforce faces interconnected challenges that require a holistic approach. Retention strategies focusing on recognition, improved working conditions, and stress management are critical for addressing high turnover rates. Enhancing job satisfaction through wage parity, career advancement opportunities, and a supportive workplace culture can further bolster workforce stability. Mental health initiatives, while valuable, must be paired with systemic reforms to address the root causes of burnout and psychological distress.

By adopting these insights, the Nova Scotia Paramedic Professional Association (NSPPA) can develop targeted policies and programs to improve paramedic retention, well-being, and professional satisfaction. These efforts will contribute to a more resilient and sustainable paramedic workforce, ultimately enhancing emergency healthcare services for the community.

Limitations of the research

While the research provides valuable insights into the professional development and support needs of paramedics in Nova Scotia, several limitations impact the scope, depth, and applicability of its findings. Understanding these limitations is essential for interpreting the results and identifying areas for further exploration and improvement.

Here are some limitations of the research:

(i) Limited Literature Review Scope: Because the research mostly uses secondary data, it might not offer thorough or current insights into the unique experiences and viewpoints of paramedics in Nova Scotia. Regional differences in workforce difficulties and the complex effects of initiatives may not be adequately represented in the literature.

(ii) Potential Bias in Sources: It is possible that the analyzed research and reports contain inherent biases, such as underreporting difficulties or overemphasizing successful projects. Reports from organizations or the government may give policies a positive assessment without questioning their efficacy.

(iii) Generalizability of Finding: Because healthcare systems, financial structures, and workplace cultures differ in Nova Scotia, best practices and tactics found in other areas or paramedic associations might not be directly applicable there. Some research's contextual uniqueness may limit their relevance to the paramedic workforce in Nova Scotia.

(iv). Focus on Short-Term Interventions: Without fully examining the sustainability or long-term effects of these initiatives, the research frequently emphasizes short-term solutions like free tuition and temporary licensing. Hence, throughout this research not much thought is given to structural and systemic reforms, which might take years to execute.

(v). Under Exploration of Non-Workplace elements: The research did not emphasize outside elements that could have a big impact on paramedics' decisions to leave or remain in the field, like the housing crisis, rural isolation, or family obligations.

(vi). Possible Over-Reliance on Peer Support Programs: Although peer support programs such as Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) are highlighted, their ability to address systemic problems and their long-term efficacy are not fully assessed in the research.

(vii). Dynamic Nature of Healthcare Challenges: Policies and workforce issues are always changing, and if major changes take place during or after the study period, the results may become old.

Moving Forward

The recommendations focus on addressing staffing shortages, enhancing mental health support, improving career development opportunities, advocating for better wages and benefits, and fostering work-life balance. By implementing these measures, professional associations can improve paramedic well-being, retention, and service quality in Nova Scotia.

(i) Advocate for Sustainable Staffing Solutions : The government, employers, and health authorities must work together to create practical staffing plans in order to alleviate the current paramedic shortage. This may entail promoting financing to recruit more paramedics and ease the burden on the current staff. Relocation aid, student loan forgiveness, and signing bonuses are a few examples of recruitment incentives that might draw in new talent. Additionally, paramedics can reduce stress and manage professional and personal obligations by experimenting with flexible scheduling choices like part-time or customizable shifts.

(ii) Evaluation of Effectiveness on Mental Health Program Initiatives in Nova Scotia: While this research provides insight into the positive outcomes of peer support and mental health programs, it is important to note that "Share It, Don't Wear It" would require careful implementation to ensure its success. Several factors contribute to the success of mental health programs:

- **Training and Assistance:** For peer support programs to be effective, paramedics must be properly trained to assist their peers as well as to identify when professional assistance is required. These measures could inadvertently burden peers more than intended if proper training isn't provided.
- **Leadership Engagement:** The success of these initiatives depends on the dedication of organizational leadership. If paramedic supervisors, union leaders, and government officials openly endorse the program, its influence will be much greater.
- **Accessibility and Materials:** Any mental health program must have readily available mental health resources, whether in the form of professional referrals or counseling services. Serious cases of PTSD, anxiety, or depression may not be adequately addressed by programs that merely provide peer support without putting paramedics in touch with experts.
- **Evaluation and Feedback:** Ongoing evaluation is necessary to assess the long-term impact of the program. This includes gathering feedback from participants, measuring outcomes like burnout rates and retention, and making adjustments based on these insights.

(iii) Focus on Professional Growth and Recognition: Opportunities for professional development, such as free or reasonably priced training for improving skills in advanced life support, leadership, or trauma care certification, are essential for promoting development. Paramedics can be inspired and given purpose by advocating for clear professional growth pathways, such as mentorship programs for Advanced Care or Critical Care roles. Campaigns for public recognition, such as feature articles or awards, can honor their efforts and raise spirits inside the industry.

(iv) Ensuring work-life balance of Paramedic members: Promoting required breaks between shifts and fair overtime regulations to avoid overwork is essential to helping paramedics achieve a better work-life balance. The stigma associated with taking time off can be lessened by implementing flexible leave choices,

like personal and mental health days. Paramedics with family responsibilities may experience less stress if they work with community organizations to offer family support services or subsidized child care.

(v) Address Compensation and Benefits: Ensuring paramedics are fairly compensated for their services requires advocating for salary parity with other provinces. Long-term stability can be achieved by negotiating better benefit packages, such as expanded pension plans and full health coverage for dental and mental health issues. Another crucial component of equitable remuneration and acknowledgment is making sure that appropriate overtime compensation is enforced for extra hours worked.

(vi) Create a Feedback-Driven Approach: A feedback-driven strategy guarantees that advocacy initiatives prioritize paramedic issues. Members' needs and priorities can be better understood by conducting annual surveys. Frequent town hall gatherings give people a forum to voice problems, give updates, and promote candid conversation. Transparent reporting on initiatives and progress ensures accountability and demonstrates how member feedback shapes the association's actions.

(vii) Strengthen Advocacy Efforts : Cooperation with paramedic unions is necessary to strengthen lobbying and increase collective bargaining power. Involving provincial and local authorities guarantees that paramedic concerns are given first priority when formulating policies. Campaigns for public advocacy that inform the public about the difficulties paramedics confront have the power to inspire broad support and pressure for changes to the law.

(vii).Foster Community and Belonging : In the paramedic community, fostering a sense of belonging can improve professional camaraderie and lessen feelings of loneliness. By planning networking activities, paramedics can interact and offer support to one another. In order to provide direction and support, peer mentorship programs can match up experienced paramedics with new paramedics. Hosting wellness days with activities such as yoga or specialized workshops can promote overall well-being and stress relief.

These actionable recommendations focus on feasible and impactful changes that associations can implement to improve their members' lives and the overall paramedic profession.

Conclusion

Paramedic associations in Nova Scotia play a transformative role in addressing the multifaceted challenges facing the profession. They provide a unified voice for paramedics, advocating for systemic changes that go beyond temporary fixes to create lasting improvements in working conditions, mental health resources, and professional opportunities. By focusing on innovative approaches such as structured career pathways, collaborative mental health programs, and policies that prioritize staffing equity, these associations foster an environment where paramedics can thrive both personally and professionally.

This research underscores the importance of leveraging data-driven insights to guide the development of tailored programs and policies that address root causes of workforce issues. The associations' capacity to engage with government and community stakeholders positions them as key drivers of systemic reform.

To ensure long-term sustainability, paramedic associations must continuously adapt to emerging challenges while prioritizing the holistic well-being of their members. Their ongoing efforts not only strengthen the paramedic profession but also elevate the quality of emergency medical care for communities across Nova Scotia.

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