

Potential paramedics will now undergo psychological screening

**By
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MANITOULIN—The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (DSB) has launched its Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Prevention Plan as mandated by the Ministry of Labour which will include pre-employment psychological screening for potential paramedics.

Robert Smith, chief of paramedic services for the DSB, went over the plan with DSB members at their April meeting in Espanola last week.

He reminded the board that in April of last year, the Ontario legislature passed Bill 163: Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act which included making PTSD a work-related illness under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act as well as the creation of a prevention plan.

He explained that the plan includes prevention aspects, such as a psychologist doing pre-employment screening; a resiliency program that teaches paramedics how to build resiliency and stay well; response after a traumatic event through the creation of a peer support team led by 12 staff members; and, in recovery, utilizing a Manitoulin physician who teaches PTSD recovery.

Statistics from the Tema Conter Memorial Trust show that in 2015, 51 first responders in Ontario committed suicide; 48 first responders committed suicide in 2016 in the province; and, so far this year, nine first responders have taken their own lives.

The report to the board explained that the hiring process includes both academics and physical testing and will now include psychological screening, which will identify personality traits, clinical symptoms and/or psychological vulnerabilities that are likely to impair a candidate's performance and core personality traits that influence a person's behaviour and performance. This same process is now used for pre-employment screening of the Ontario Provincial Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The costing for year one of the plan comes in at \$40,211.

"From a human resources perspective, it's safe to say there's a bona fide requirement for pre-screening," said Ebran Baldauf, managing partner with DiBrina Group, the DSB's human resources contractor. "The goal is to ensure paramedics are well suited for the profession and are resilient people to take on the work."

The board passed a resolution for the adoption of the plan.