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Liberals Unveil Plan to Keep Hospital ERs Open

ALBERTON, PEI - Liberal Leader Sharon Cameron today released the party's plan to increase access to hospital emergency rooms and collaborative emergency centres for Islanders.

"It seems that hardly a week goes by where there isn't an ER closure announced," said Cameron. "These closures are symptomatic of the healthcare crisis under the King government. Islanders need a healthcare system they can count on. That's why we're proposing a comprehensive plan to ensure that Islanders get the emergency care where and when they need it."

Just this week, King's County Memorial Hospital in Montague closed its ER early. Meanwhile, the CEC at Western Hospital was closed last fall, re-opened and then closed again. The government has given no further update since last November.

Even though understaffing has been cited as the reason for the closures, Cameron said the issues go deeper. "Because thousands of residents don't have a family doctor, many have had to use our hospitals as substitute walk-in clinics. This increased demand creates longer wait-times and frustration by both patients and our healthcare workers," she said. "That's why we need a comprehensive approach under our Healthcare First plan to keep our ERs and CECs open to provide urgent care."

To improve access to ERs and CECs, the Liberal Party's *Healthcare First* will:

1. **Ensure adequate staffing of ERs and CECs** through innovative compensation and staffing models;
2. **Expand the hours of and the number of walk-in clinics** to divert Islanders from ERs for non-urgent care needs;
3. **Expand virtual healthcare/telemedicine** to divert Islanders from ERs for non-urgent care needs;

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4. **Invest in interim residential services and facilities** for medically discharged patients who need supports before returning home;
5. **Invest in restorative care beds** so that medically discharged patients have an appropriate care setting to go to recover with the required medical supports;
6. **Expand access to primary care in non-urgent settings** to divert patients away from ERs;
7. **Leverage other health professionals such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants** who can become part of the ER care team to address shortages and improve access to care; and
8. **Ensure emergency medicine offers compensation commensurate to the stress and difficulty of working conditions** so that nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, and other health care providers view emergency medicine as an attractive specialty of the health profession.

“Our plan identifies concrete ways that government leadership can improve how we provide care to Islanders,” said Cameron. “We do not accept the King government’s approach to ignoring the issues with our ERs and CECs. Their inaction has only worsened the healthcare crisis.”

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