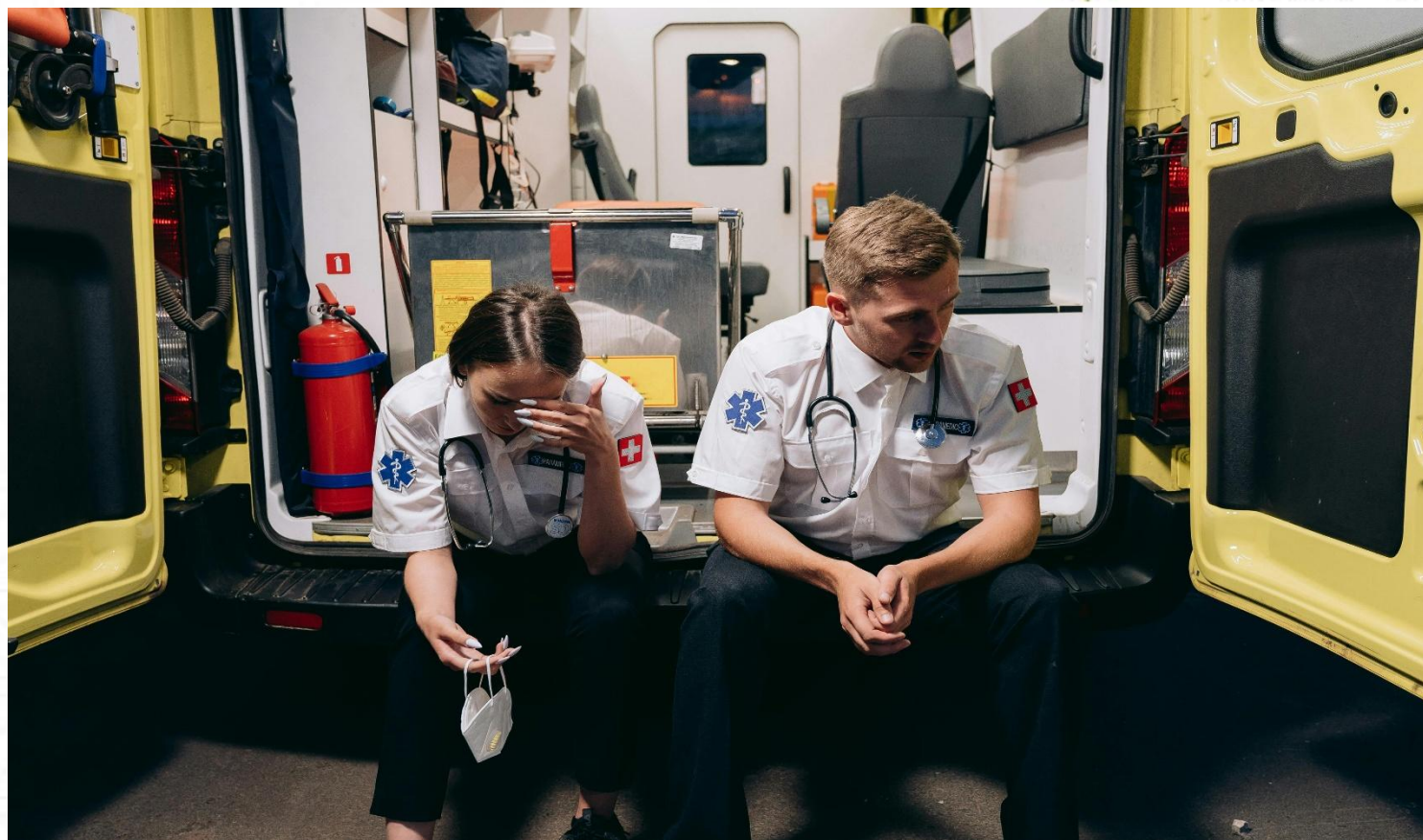




Addressing the Growing Crisis of Psychological Stress Injuries Among Canada's Public Safety Personnel

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Context

- Public safety personnel face escalating levels of psychological stress injuries (PSI)
- PSI (e.g., major depressive disorder, panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder) can have lasting impacts
- 2018 Humboldt bus crash a stark example of the toll PSI takes
- National study found 44.5% of public safety personnel screened positive for symptoms consistent with one or more mental disorders
- Pressing need for targeted, evidence-based strategies and a cultural shift within public safety institutions
- These proportions are statistically significantly higher than the general population
- Rates increase with years of service and psychologically traumatic event exposures

Considerations

- Despite increased investments, stress injury rates have not meaningfully declined
- RCMP face worsening mental health outcomes due to frequent trauma and inadequate support
- First responders are all susceptible to PSI
- Disturbingly high rates of suicidal ideation and behaviors compared to the general population
- Disconnect between policy intentions and outcomes reveals deep-rooted systemic, cultural, and logistical challenges
- High costs of psychological stress injuries
 - January 2016 - November 2020, Ontario police officers filed 1,529 PTSD claims, costing \$134 million
 - Other approved claims during the same period totaled \$37 million

Questions

- Would you agree PSI is a ‘wicked’ policy issue?
- If yes, why?
- How and by whom should the issue of PSI be addressed?
- Where does the public policy responsibility rest?
- What are the key factors that need to be considered?
- What are the policy tools that need to be part of a solution?