



Canadian Psychiatric Association
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COMMUNIQUÉ

Release of Mental Health Strategy for Canada An Historic Milestone Say Canadian Psychiatrists

Attention: News, Health, Medical and Lifestyle Editors

Ottawa, ON, May 8, 2012—The Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA) congratulates the Mental Health Commission of Canada on developing and releasing Canada's first-ever mental health strategy.

“The release of the mental health strategy is an historic milestone and something the CPA has advocated for 15 years,” said CPA President Dr. Fiona McGregor. “The release of a strategy will not in itself bring more beds, train more psychiatrists, or immediately produce more equitable funding from the health care budget, however it provides a powerful reference from which to advocate for improvements in services and supports and to develop Canadian benchmarks in mental health, making it less likely people with mental illness will be forgotten.”

Mental illness and poor mental health have a profound impact on Canadian society. It is estimated at least one in five Canadians suffer from a mental illness in a given year and that mental illness costs the Canadian economy \$51 billion dollars annually.

The CPA first called for a national strategy on mental health and mental illness at its annual conference in 1997. This call could not have been heard without joining forces with family and consumer groups and other mental health professionals and service providers. It was through the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH), a broad mental health coalition of which CPA is a founding member, that *A Call for Action* was released in 2000. This document, which articulated CAMIMH's vision for mental health care in Canada caught the attention of politicians including the Senate Committee studying mental health care in Canada. The Senate's report, *Out of the Shadows At Last* incorporated many of CAMIMH's recommendations, including the development of a national strategy.

“The release of the strategy today is a first step,” said Dr. McGregor. “Now governments need to adequately fund the strategy to ensure it is translated into a system of supports, services and treatments for Canadians with mental illness and mental health problems. It is important that mental health receive dedicated government funding and that funds spent on mental health, mental disorders and addictions are proportionate to the burden of illness they represent in Canada.”

The CPA looks forward to reviewing the strategy in detail and continuing to partner with government, mental health providers, Canadians with lived experience, family groups, employers and the Commission to improve mental health care in Canada.

The Canadian Psychiatric Association is the national voice for Canada's 4,100 psychiatrists and more than 600 psychiatric residents. Founded in 1951, the CPA is dedicated to promoting an environment that fosters excellence in the provision of clinical care, education and research.

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