

April 16, 2013

The Hon. Diane Finley
Minister of Human Resources and Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

RE: Housing First and Affordable Housing

Dear Minister Finley:

Established in 1998, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) is an alliance of mental health organizations comprised of health care providers and organizations representing persons with mental illness and their families and caregivers. CAMIMH's mandate is to ensure that mental health is placed on the national agenda so that persons with a lived experience of mental illness and their families receive appropriate access to care and support.

In this regard, CAMIMH followed closely the 2008 Government of Canada investment of \$110 million through a funding agreement between Health Canada and the Mental Health Commission of Canada to support a five-year demonstration project to evaluate what services and systems best help people experiencing serious mental illness and homelessness. The documented experience of the *Housing First* approach of *At Home/Chez Soi* clearly demonstrated that collaboration in addressing the social determinants of health across government sectors and among different service providers at the program and the individual level results in positive steps forward for participants and a strong return on investment for government.

In Budget 2013 the Government of Canada chose to maintain support for the *Housing First* approach with an investment of \$119 million per year over five years to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. CAMIMH is extremely appreciative of this commitment as well the renewed commitment of \$253 million per year over five years to work with provinces and territories to help Canadians in need find and keep affordable housing.

CAMIMH Members

Autism Society of Canada

Canadian Association for
Suicide Prevention

Canadian Association of
Occupational Therapists

Canadian Association of Social
Workers

Canadian Coalition for
Seniors' Mental Health

Canadian Counselling and
Psychotherapy Association

Canadian Federation of Mental
Health Nurses

Canadian Healthcare
Association

Canadian Medical Association

Canadian Mental Health
Association

Canadian Psychological
Association

Canadian Psychiatric
Association

The College of Family
Physicians Canada

Canadian Psychiatric Research
Foundation

Mood Disorders Society of
Canada

National Network for Mental
Health

Psychosocial Rehabilitation
Canada

Schizophrenia Society of
Canada

Affiliate Members

Union of Psychiatric Nurses
of BC

It is the expectation of CAMIMH that the renewed commitments to affordable housing in Budget 2013 will be complemented with deeper investments to a comprehensive national affordable housing strategy. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) latest corporate plan, the Government of Canada expended approximately \$3 billion on Housing Program Expenses in 2010. This spending was down by \$1 billion to \$2 billion in 2013 and will be down to \$1.7 billion by 2016.

This is a drastically reduced overall commitment to social housing that will severely decrease the number of subsidized homes available to Canadians precisely when all indicators point to the need for a drastic increase of affordable housing in order to support the growth of our evolving economy. According to CMHC, in 2008, there were 623,700 households assisted through federal affordable housing expenses. CMHC projects that, with the ongoing reductions, the number of federally assisted households will be at 525,000 by 2016 - a reduction of 98,700 subsidized homes, or a drop of 16%.

Again, given the overall projected underfunding of affordable housing in Canada, CAMIMH strongly encourages that the Government of Canada work with the provinces and territories to develop a national housing strategy that complements both adopted poverty reduction plans and mental health strategies.

Again, CAMIMH is fully supportive of the steps taken in Budget 2013 to support the *Housing First* approach as well as commitments to the renewal of affordable housing agreements with the provinces and territories.

Sincerely,



Dr. John Higenbottam
CAMIMH, Co-Chair



Dave Gallson
CAMIMH, Co-Chair

cc. The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C.,
Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Thomas Mulcair
Leader of the Official Opposition and New Democratic Party of Canada

The Honourable Justin Trudeau
Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Ms. Chris Charlton, M.P. Hamilton Mountain
NDP Critic, HRDC for Housing

Mr. Rodger Cuzner, M.P. Cape Breton - Canso
Liberal Critic, HRDC for Housing