CANADIAN ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

ALLIANCE CANADIENNE POUR MALADIE MENTALE ET LA SANTÉ MENTALE

February 11, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Francois Legault
Chair, Council of the Federation
Premier of Québec
360 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON K1R 7X7

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Legault:

The Canadian Alliance of Mental Health and Mental Illness (CAMIMH) is the national voice for mental health in Canada. CAMIMH represents mental health groups comprised of mental health care providers and not-for-profit organizations that represent people with lived experience with mental illness, their families, and caregivers. On behalf of the Alliance, we thank you for your ongoing leadership in responding to the unprecedented challenges associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Prime Minister, given your recent comments about being open to discussing the level of federal health transfers to the provinces and territories, we urge the federal, as well as provincial and territorial governments to increase their investments in mental health services and supports in Canada.

One does not need to look far to see the unrelenting toll that COVID-19 is having on Canadians; isolation, anxiety, depression, domestic violence, suicide, eating disorders and substance use are all contributing to a decline on our collective mental health. The need is particularly compelling where 40% of Canadians said that their mental health had worsened since the COVID-19 outbreak, a figure which increases to 61% for those with a pre-existing mental health issue.

For too long there has been a lack of public investment in providing the people of Canada with timely access to mental health services and supports. In our view, there is no health without mental health and a strong majority of Canadians support increased public funding for mental health in parity to services and supports for physical health.

Mental Health Parity requires funding a system that supports mental health care equal to physical health care. Implementing Mental Health Parity will accelerate needed system change to support the long-term recovery of our nation with the same urgency and resources as we have for physical health.

If we retain the status quo – knowing that many Canadians are currently waiting for mental health care – our concern is that the impact of COVID-19 will overwhelm our mental health system, leaving those truly in need to suffer without care.

CAMIMH MEMBERS

Canadian Association of Social Workers

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses

Canadian Medical Association

Canadian Mental Health Association

Canadian Psychiatric Association

Canadian Psychological Association

Medical Psychotherapy Association of Canada

National Initiative for Eating Disorders

National Network for Mental Health

Schizophrenia Society of Canada

Psychosocial Rehabilitation Canada

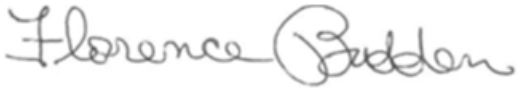
The College of Family Physicians Canada

CAMIMH believes that this is a moment in time for the federal government, working in close collaboration with the provinces and territories, to find common ground in terms of putting the mental health of Canadians first. If not now, when?

In closing, CAMIMH appreciates the federal, provincial and territorial governments' decision to provide additional resources to support the mental health community, however, more needs to be done. Mental health matters and can play a critical role in ensuring that each of us can contribute, in our own way, to a brighter future and our collective potential.

The Alliance would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these issues further and can be reached at Florence.budden@mun.ca or ec.camimh@gmail.com.

Sincerely yours,



Ellen Cohen
CAMIMH Co-Chair

Florence Budden, BN.RN.CPMHN(C)
CAMIMH Co-Chair

Copies to: Premiers of Canada
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Federal Minister of Health