

Mental Health Commission of Canada - Media Backgrounder

31 August 2007
Ottawa, Ontario

The creation of a mental health commission was a key recommendation of a 2006 report of the Standing Senate Committee written by the Honourable Michale Kirby and the Honourable Wilbert Keon. The report, entitled, "Out of the Shadows at Last: Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada" outlined the need for a mental health commission in Canada to provide an ongoing national focus on mental health issues.

In Budget 2007, Canada's New Government committed \$10 million over the next two years and \$15 million per year starting in 2009-10 to support the establishment of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, an arm's length, not-for-profit corporation.

The activities of the Commission will be focused in three areas: developing a national mental health strategy; sharing knowledge and best practices for the benefit of Canadians from coast to coast to coast; and undertaking public awareness and education in order to combat the hurtful stigma associated with mental illness.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board, chaired by the Honourable Michael Kirby is made up of 11 non-government directors and six government-appointed directors. Nearly 500 applications from all across the country were received for the non-government positions on the Board.

The makeup of the Board reflects the diversity of Canadians who are involved with mental health issues: three members of the Board live with a mental illness, two represent Canada's Aboriginal people – one First Nations and one Inuit, and others are family caregivers, peer support workers and service providers at the community level, in hospitals and in private clinical practice.

Non-government Directors

Joan Edwards Karmazyn: A resident of Grand Bank, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ms. Karmazyn is President of the Consumers' Health Awareness Network, Newfoundland and Labrador, Vice-President of the Board of Directors of the National Network for Mental Health, and an Executive Committee Member of the Canadian Coalition of Alternative Mental Resources. Ms. Karmazyn lives with a mental illness.

Andy Cox: A resident of Milford Station, Nova Scotia, Mr. Cox is employed as a mental health patient advocate for children and youth at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax and is also a member of various boards and committees, advocating for mental health. He lives with bipolar disorder.

Jeannette Leblanc: A resident of Moncton, New Brunswick, Ms. Leblanc is a Registered Nurse, University Professor and a past Chair of the community mental health advisory committee to the New Brunswick Minister of Health. She is a mother of a child living with schizophrenia.

Louise de Bellefeuille: A resident of Montreal, Quebec, Ms. De Bellefeuille is the Head-Nurse of the Psychiatric Unit of Sir Mortimer B. Davis Jewish General Hospital, Montreal. She has five years' experience as the Head Nurse at the adolescent psychiatric unit of l'Hopital Ste. Justine in Montreal and 10 years' experience as the Coordinator of adult francophone day care services at the Douglas Hospital in Montreal.

Tony Boeckh: A resident of Montreal, Quebec, Mr. Boeckh is President of Boeckh Capital Co. Ltd and a former CEO and Editor-in-Chief of BCA Publications. He is a mental health philanthropist and is also a parent of a deceased child who had a mental illness.

Mary May Simon: A resident of Nunavik, Quebec, Ms. Simon is President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Chair of the Alianait Committee. She has 15 years' experience as Executive Council Member, 10 years' experience as Canadian Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs and was President and Special Envoy of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. Ms. Simon is a former member of the Nunavut Implementation Commission and founding Chair of the Arctic Children and Youth Foundation.

David Goldbloom: A resident of Toronto, Ontario, Mr. Goldbloom is the Senior Medical Advisor of Education and Public Affairs at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto. He is also a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto with five years' experience as Physician-in-Chief at CAMH as well as three years' experience as Chief of Staff at the Clarke Institute in Toronto. He also has an active clinical practice.

Chris Summerville: A resident of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Mr. Summerville is the Interim CEO of the Schizophrenia Society of Canada as well as the Executive Director of the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society. He is a certified Psychosocial Rehabilitation Practitioner, an ordained Pastor credentialed with the Associated Gospel Churches of Canada, and past Chair of both the Manitoba Provincial Advisory Council on Mental Health to the Minister of Health and the Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health in Manitoba. Mr. Summerville has personal experience with mental illness as a family member and as an individual.

Fern Stockdale-Winder: A resident of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Ms. Stockdale-Winder is the Director of the Department of Clinical Health Psychology and the Professional Leader of Psychology at the Saskatoon Health Region. She is Chair of the Seniors Mental Health Steering Committee at the Saskatoon Health Region and also the co-author of a website focused on the promotion of mental well-being. (www.roadtowellbeing.ca)

Lorraine Breault: A resident of Edmonton, Alberta, Ms. Breault is the Associate Dean at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Alberta and also owns her own independent private practice in clinical and consulting psychology. She has five years' experience as Assistant Professor and Director of Equity at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Alberta and eight years' experience as a clinical psychologist at various hospitals in the Edmonton area.

Madeleine Dion Stout: A resident of Delta, British Columbia and a band member of Kehewin First Nation in Alberta, Ms. Stout is an Aboriginal Health Development Consultant and a former coordinator of Native and Northern Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa. She has nearly 20 years' experience with the Medical Services Branch of Health Canada, focusing on First Nations and Inuit health and has been a member of dozens of First Nations health committees and task forces over the years and is also trained as a nurse.

Government Directors

Patrick Dion – Vice-President, Consulting, Summa Strategies Canada Inc. Mr. Dion has served as policy analyst with the federal Finance Department's International Trade Policy Division and legislative and communications advisor to the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions. He currently serves as Chair of the Board of the City of Ottawa-owned Pine View Municipal Golf Course and is a member of the Board of Directors of Hydro Ottawa Holding Inc.

Paddy Meade – Deputy Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness, Government of Alberta. Ms. Meade was appointed Deputy Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness in November 2004. Prior to this position, she served as Chief Executive Officer of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, spent three years as Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and six years as Executive Director of the Correctional Services Division Young Offender Branch for Alberta Justice.

John Wright – Deputy Minister of Health, Government of Saskatchewan
Mr. Wright began his career in 1977 with Saskatchewan Finance, became Deputy Minister in 1990 and held that position until 1995. Between 1995 and 2004, Mr. Wright served as President and CEO of Saskatchewan Government Insurance, President of the Crown Investments Corporation and President and Chief Executive Officer of SaskPower. Mr. Wright is an Adjunct Professor in the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Regina.

Greg Cummings – Assistant Deputy Minister Operational Support, NWT Health and Social Services
Prior to joining NWT Health and Social Services, Mr. Cummings was CEO of the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority. He was CEO for the Tlicho Community Services Agency, has worked as a Director with Vancouver's University Hospital and as a senior manager with the Fraser Valley and Richmond Health Authorities.

Nora Kelly – Deputy Minister of Health, Government of New Brunswick
Ms. Kelly was appointed Deputy Minister of Health in February 2001. Prior to this appointment, Ms. Kelly was Deputy Minister of Training and Development. Ms. Kelly's other positions include: Deputy Minister of Labour, Assistant Deputy Minister for Corrections and Community Services as well as Vice-President, Operations for the New Brunswick Workplace, Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

Morris Rosenberg – Deputy Minister of Health, Health Canada
Mr. Rosenberg was appointed Deputy Minister of Health in December 2004. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Rosenberg served as Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General of Canada from July 1998 to December 2004. He began his public service career with the Department of Justice in 1979. From 1989 to 1993, Mr. Rosenberg served as Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Affairs and Legislative Policy in the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In addition, from 1993 to 1996, he served as Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet, Economic and Regional Development Policy, at the Privy Council Office. Mr. Rosenberg was also appointed Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (Operations) in 1996.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIRS

In addition, the Board will be assisted by eight Advisory Committee Chairs who will provide advice to the Board and support the Commission in engaging with the broader stakeholder community.

Children and Youth: Simon Davidson

Mr. Davidson is the Executive Director of the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), in Ottawa. He is also the Chief of Psychiatry and Medical Director of the Mental Health Patient Service Unit at CHEO. In addition, Mr. Davidson is the Chair of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry for the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Ottawa as well as the Past President of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Mental Health and the Law: Edward (Ted) Ormston

Mr. Ormston was appointed to the Ontario Court of Justice in 1989. He is currently

seconded to act as Chair of the Mental Health Consent and Capacity Board and has been instrumental in creating the world's first Mental Health Court in Ontario. Mr. Ormston also lectures extensively on mental health issues to judges across Canada and internationally.

Seniors: Marie-France Tourigny-Rivard

Ms. Tourigny-Rivard is a Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Ottawa, a Clinical Director for the Integrated Geriatric Psychiatric Program at the Royal Ottawa Health Care Group and a member of the Champlain-District Mental Health Implementation Task Force. She was the first recipient of the Leadership Award from the Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry and past president of the Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry.

Aboriginal: William (Bill) Mussell

Mr. Mussell is a member of the Skwah First Nation, Chilliwack Landing in British Columbia. He is the founder and principal educator of the Sal'i'shan Institute, established in 1988 as a private post-secondary agency specializing in indigenous programs and services. Mr. Mussell was also the President and Chair of the Native Mental Health Association of Canada for 15 years and is currently a co-chair of the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health.

Workplace: Bill Wilkerson

Mr. Wilkerson is the co-founder and CEO of the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health. He is also co-author of *Mindsets: Mental Health – The Ultimate Productivity Weapon*. Mr. Wilkerson has designed an MBA program on mental health and productivity for the School of Business at McGill University. He is the former president of Liberty Health, then Canada's largest health benefits company and a five-time national award winner, including the Canadian Psychiatric Association's "Special Recognition Award" in 2006.

Family Caregivers: Ella Amir

Ms. Amir has been the Executive Director of AMI-Quebec Action on Mental Illness (formerly Alliance for the Mentally Ill), for the past 17 years. AMI-Quebec is one of the principal resources in Quebec for families struggling to cope with mental illness. AMI-Quebec promotes recovery-based care by working actively with hospitals, local community service centres and the community.

Service Providers: Steve Lurie

Mr. Lurie has 32 years experience as Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, including 28 with CMHA's Metro Toronto Branch. He is an Adjunct Professor in Mental Health Policy and Services in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto. Mr. Lurie has written reports on mental health services in Ontario, has two years experience (on secondment) as Mental Health and Addictions Coordinator at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Science: Elliot Goldner

Mr. Goldner is a Professor in the newly created interdisciplinary Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. He established and was the founding Director of the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. He is also the Director of the Research in Mental Health and Addiction Policy and Services program. He was head of the Division of Mental Health Policy and Services at the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine from 1999-2005 and also established and led the Mental Health Evaluation and Community Consultation Unit for six years.

More information on the Mental Health Commission of Canada can be found at <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/>.

Prime Minister launches national Mental Health Commission

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PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you, Senator Keon, and thank you all for the opportunity to speak to you today and to make an important announcement here at your conference on mental health in Canada.

It won't come as news to anyone in this room that more and more men, women and children are becoming aware of the pervasiveness of mental health disorders.

Some blame the hectic pace of modern life, the trend to smaller and fragmented families, often separated by great distances, or the mass migration from small, stable communities to huge, impersonal cities.

The causes may be unclear, but the consequences are obvious.

We see mental illness everywhere - among the homeless on our streets.

We see it in our workplaces, among co-workers felled by stress or worse, and we see it in our families, where we become intimately acquainted with the pain and suffering it causes.

It is estimated that one in five Canadians will develop some kind of mental illness in his or her lifetime.

Nearly one million are plagued with a severe or persistent disorder, and it's now the fastest-growing category of disability insurance claims in Canada.

Despite these worrisome trends, however, there is more reason for hope than despair.

While there are still many mysteries of the human mind yet to be unravelled, we've come a long way from the primitive diagnoses and barbaric treatments of the not-so-distant past.

We now understand that mental illness is not a supernatural phenomenon or a character flaw.

We recognize it can be caused by physiological as well as environmental factors, and, most importantly, we know it can be controlled and often cured.

Many of you here today, along with countless other doctors, scientists and researchers, have contributed to these tremendous advances.

The cause has also been served by legions of compassionate people standing up for the victims of mental illness and serving as their public advocates.

Two of the most notable advocates have been the Honourable Michael Kirby and Senator Keon.

These gentlemen led the Senate Committee that laid the groundwork for today's announcement - they made the case for a comprehensive national strategy.

They showed how we can improve the ways we develop and share our knowledge of mental health issues.

They argued, eloquently and passionately, that we must reject once and for all the stigma attached to mental illness, and they proposed that a national mental health commission be created to pursue all these goals – and that's what brings me here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to announce that the people with me here on the stage are some of the new board members and advisory committee chairs for the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

The board members were chosen from close to 500 applicants after broad public consultation. They represent the best minds in Canada's mental health field today.

In addition to their extensive professional qualifications, many have first-hand personal experience of mental illness within their families.

As a result, they have profound empathy for the mentally ill and unique insight into how we can respond to this national challenge.

The people chosen as board members and advisory committee chairs represent expertise from all parts of Canada.

Each committee will focus on specific aspects of mental health, and all will provide invaluable support for the board.

Together, they will lead a national campaign to erase the stigma attached to mental illness.

They will also serve as a national clearing house for information on the best medical practices for dealing with it.

In Budget 2007, our government established the new mental health commission as the cornerstone of our strategy to address mental health issues in Canada. The commission will improve quality of life for Canadians dealing with mental illness and their families.

It will seek to ensure Canadians in every part of the country will have access to the best possible prevention, diagnosis and treatment practices.

So that someone suffering from depression in St. John's will obtain the same quality of care as someone struggling with schizophrenia in Victoria.

Mental illness has a significant impact on all our lives.

It visits us in our homes, our workplaces and on the streets of our communities.

It costs our economy billions and our society untold grief.

In short, it's a major national public health problem, and that's why we now have a new national agency to deal with it – the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Thank you.