



Call to Action

December 3, 2018

CMHA NS Division highlights the need for Nova Scotia to bring mental health care into balance with physical health care

DARTMOUTH, Nova Scotia (November 30, 2018) – The Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia Division (CMHA NS) is pushing for change emphasizing that Nova Scotians are in dire need of affordable, accessible, timely, universal mental health addictions and support services.

Over half of Canadians (53%) consider mental health to be at an epidemic state, with that perception spiking amongst younger people, according to a new survey commissioned by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). Eighty-five per cent of Canadians say mental health services are among the most underfunded services in our health-care system—and the majority agree (86%) that the Government of Canada should fund mental health at the same level as physical health.

CMHA recently released a policy paper *Mental Health in the Balance: Ending the Health Care Disparity in Canada*, which calls for new legislation to address unmet mental health needs and bring mental health care into balance with physical health care.

“The Mental Health Parity Act we are advocating for is not just about increasing funding for mental health services, but also improving coordination, treatment, research and access and making better choices about how best to spend health-care dollars effectively,” says Dr. Patrick Smith, national CEO, CMHA.

Lengthy wait times are a problem, in part, because there has been a chronic underfunding of community-based mental health services and a reliance on intensive, high-cost services like psychiatrists and hospitals. Lengthy wait times in Nova Scotia are common among patients, as there are not enough family physicians to serve the population base. Community-based mental health prevention programs and services are not currently core funded by government, such as those provided by the CMHA NS Division and its 7 Branches.

“CMHA NS is concerned with the state of health care in the province,” said Pamela Magee Executive Director of CMHA NS. “Without increased and sustained investment in healthcare and social systems, those seeking mental health and addiction care and supports are subjected to unreasonable wait times, and increasing of late ‘no’ or ‘limited access to

appropriate care and support’,” she expressed. “It is evident over the last two years within Nova Scotia that this can lead to less than desirable outcomes.”

CMHA NS advocates for a tiered stepped-care approach within Nova Scotia that redefines the traditional model to include non-government community based mental health services and supports, that will focus on building resilience and improving the quality of life of all Nova Scotians, though mental health promotion and prevention in turn, reducing the overall burden on our health care system.

On behalf of all Nova Scotians CMHA NS feels NOW is the time to ACT and is calling upon government to seriously consider the burden and impact that under supported mental health and social systems are placing on quality of life and health outcomes of all Nova Scotians, including those who provide direct and indirect care – clinical and community-based.

If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs immediate mental health services, call 911 or contact the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team at 1-902-429-8167 or toll free 1-888-429-8167.

To learn more about CMHA NS or for information on community based mental health tools and supports please visit <https://novascotia.cmha.ca> or <http://ns.211.ca>

About the Canadian Mental Health Association, Nova Scotia Division

The CMHA is governed by a National vision: “Mentally healthy people in a healthy society” and provides community-based mental health and addiction supports and services within three key strategic areas: Strengthening Our Collective Voice, Ensuring Quality Services and Enhancing Organizational Health. CMHA NS Division’s mission is to support the Mental Health of all Nova Scotians. This mission is achieved through the provision of community-based supports and services that promotes positive mental health- quality of life- and prevents mental ill health related injury and disease.

Related Links

<https://novascotia.cmha.ca>

For further information:

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