

Submission for the Government of Manitoba's Pre-Budget Consultation

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in Manitoba respectfully submits our recommendations in response to the Government of Manitoba's call for submissions for their pre-budget consultation.

Who we are:

CMHA in Manitoba is part of a nation-wide, voluntary organization that promotes the *mental health* of all Canadians and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness. Each year we provide direct services across Manitoba through the combined efforts of over one hundred staff and countless volunteers. The services we offer cover a wide range (e.g., brief intervention, cognitive-behavioural therapy, service navigation, employment, housing, youth services, peer support, and public education).

We believe the wealth of our province is connected to the health of our province. And, in order to ensure a healthy province we believe we must protect the mental health of Manitobans. Quite simply, there is no wealth without health, and there is no health without mental health.

The cost of business as usual:

Mental illness affects nearly every Manitoban community, family and workplace. Research tells us that one in five Canadians will experience mental illness every year, with a cost of \$50 billion to our economy. In Manitoba, our research shows that one in four Manitobans will experience a mental health diagnosis within a five year period. For 70% of these individuals, their illness will be onset in childhood.

- Depression is the number one reason Canadians visit their physicians
- Over one-third of hospital stays are for mental illness
- Waiting times remain the number one obstacle to accessing timely care

Mental illness has a significant impact on our economy - it decreases productivity in the workplace and increases absenteeism, and it places considerable strain on our healthcare, justice and social service systems, which keeps us from meeting our economic and social objectives.

We are heartened to hear that our new government is planning a review of Manitoba's health-care system; our current system is not sustainable given the above-cited statistics of mental illness. The cost of business as usual is far too great.

We must think differently about how we fund mental health:

In our current system of mental health, Manitobans who struggle with mental illness face enormous wait times to access psychotherapy and psychiatry services (i.e., on average, six months and greater). For so many people, while waiting for these services, their illness will worsen, their employment will become jeopardized, their families will breakdown and their relationships will suffer. In the end, their mental health problem – an issue that could have been

resolved quickly and cost-effectively – will all too often deteriorate into a state of crisis that requires far more costly and lengthy healthcare services. Not only is this unfair to the many Manitobans – including children – who are languishing on wait lists, it is fiscally unsustainable.

Smart investments pay dividends:

Smart investments in prevention and early intervention ensure you pay less down the road on crisis services. At CMHA, we know the value of evidence-based, cost-effective prevention and early intervention investments, and we know how to implement them. There are a number of such services that we have established throughout many communities in Manitoba. We are well-positioned to scale up these services and maximize their return on investment. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these services with you further:

- 1) **Expand the Bounce Back program:** Bounce Back is a low-cost telephone-delivered program offering Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to patients experiencing mild-to-moderate depression and anxiety. The program gives people skills for self-management, increasing their capacity and confidence to manage stressors in their lives. Since implementing this evidence-based program in October 2015, in partnership with the Interlake Regional Health Authority and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, we have received over 215 referrals from family doctors/nurse practitioners. This telephone-based delivery model could easily be established in northern, rural, and other harder-to-reach communities.
- 2) **Expand Child and Family supports:** While children in Manitoba are on waiting lists to receive psychological and psychiatry services, we provide an important interim service to those children and their families (e.g., family education and support for parents, CTB counseling for children and youth, and service navigation). Addressing wait lists is essential, however, until such time that wait lists are significantly reduced, we believe it is essential to provide supports to children and families to help them prevent the illness from reaching a crisis state.
- 3) **Expand Community Housing with Supports (CHS):** Our successful CHS program supports Manitobans struggling with chronic mental illness to find and keep housing and work toward employment and education goals. The supports we provide ease the strain that chronic homelessness places on our healthcare, justice, and social services systems.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations as part of the Government of Manitoba's call for submissions for the pre-budget consultation. Please contact me at:

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