

April 21, 2011

Dr. John Higenbottam  
Chair  
Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health  
141 Laurier Avenue West, Suite 702  
Ottawa, ON, K1P 5J3

Dear Dr. Higenbottam,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to your questions regarding the New Democratic party's platform on mental health. New Democrats are committed to supporting families and individuals affected by mental illness and are proposing a Mental Health Strategy in line with recommendations from the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

New Democrats are committing \$25 million annually over the next four years for a Mental Health Strategy. The details are the following:

- When establishing a Mental Health Strategy, New Democrats will work with the provinces, territories and First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments to implement best practices.
- Strategy would include a public awareness campaign to begin to address the stigma surrounding mental illness.
- The Mental Health Strategy would also acknowledge the need for affordable housing.
- The Mental Health Strategy would incorporate the National Suicide Prevention Strategy proposed by NDP MP Megan Leslie in Bill C-593.

Understanding that mental health is also a major issue in Canada's prisons and correctional facilities, New Democrats will ensure that appropriate care, treatment, and interventions are available for mentally ill offenders in prison, as recommended by the Correctional Investigator of Canada.

In addition, as I am sure you are aware, people living with mental illness are severely affected by social and economic inequality and often live in poverty. In this election New

Democrats are putting forward a number of initiatives to tackle the reality of poverty in Canada.

New Democrats will help lift children and families out of poverty with the following measures:

- We will table legislation that will set goals and targets for poverty reduction in consultation with the provincial, territorial, municipal and Aboriginal governments and with non-governmental organizations.
- As a practical first step to eliminate child poverty, we will combine existing supports like the *Child Tax Benefit* to create a non-taxable *Child Benefit* and increase the support steadily by up to \$700 per child over the next four years. This will be in addition to the current *Universal Child Care Benefit*;

We will also continue support for affordable housing and make a significant new investment to ensure that the affordable housing needs of Canadians are met.

- We will enact the NDP's legislation to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians;
- We will restore funding for the homeowners Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), and the Affordable Housing Initiative to increase the supply of affordable housing, in partnership with the provinces and territories;
- We will provide significant new funding for affordable and social housing.

Thank you again for this opportunity and please feel free to visit [www.ndp.ca](http://www.ndp.ca) for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Layton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Jack Layton, Leader

New Democratic Party of Canada