



For Immediate Release

ATTENTION: News, Health, Medical, National Reporters and Editors

CANADA NEEDS A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON MENTAL ILLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Ottawa (October 10, 2002) -- A National Summit on Mental Health and Mental Illness co hosted by the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), the Canadian Psychological Association and the Canadian Psychiatric Association ended with a call for a national action plan to address mental illness and promote mental health in Canada.

Mental illness is the third leading cause of disability in Canada and the second leading cause of mortality among its young people. A recent Health Canada report has established the direct and indirect costs of mental illness to Canadian society at a staggering \$14 billion dollars.

“Mental illnesses and mental health problems are truly national health issues on a major scale,” said Dr. Henry Haddad, past president of the CMA. “And we should be addressing mental health issues commensurate with the level of their impact and burden on all Canadians and society,” he added.

Nearly 20 national organizations active in the mental health and mental illness field came together during the Summit to outline the values, principles and elements that must be respected in the development and implementation of a national action plan. The meeting was co-chaired by the head of the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, Phil Upshall.

“Strong federal leadership is the key to ensure that Canada is a community where there is good mental health for all, and that all Canadians with mental illness, their families and care providers have access to the care, support and respect to which they are entitled,” noted Dr. John Service, executive director of the Canadian Psychological Association.

The meeting participants concluded that core elements of a national action plan should include:

- National mental health goals
- A policy framework that includes research, surveillance, education and mental health promotion, and a health human resources plan
- Adequate and sustained funding
- An accountability mechanism.

“The level of positive collaboration and cooperation among the many mental health stakeholders attending the Summit was indicative of the seriousness of this issue. Mental illness and mental health can no longer be relegated to the back rooms of our health care system,” said Dr. Pierre Beauséjour, chair of the Canadian Psychiatric Association.

The following organizations have agreed to jointly issue this press release today on World Mental Health Day and will continue to work together on the proposals generated at the Summit. A consensus statement on a National Action Plan for Mental Illness and Mental Health is scheduled for release in December.

Autism Society of Canada
Canadian Academy of Child Psychiatry
Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
Canadian Association of Social Workers
Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention
Canadian Coalition for Seniors Mental Health
Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs
Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses
Canadian Medical Association
Canadian Mental Health Association
Canadian Psychiatric Association
Canadian Psychological Association
College of Family Physicians of Canada
Mood Disorders Society of Canada
National Network for Mental Health
Schizophrenia Society of Canada

Many more organizations are expected to join this list over the coming months. Many of the participating organizations are also supporting this year's Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 6-12).

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