



Open Letter to Canadians

To: Canadian Public

From: Louise Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mental Health Commission of Canada

As required by our Funding Agreement with Health Canada, an independent evaluation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) was completed in March 2011. Charis Management Consulting Inc. (Charis) was selected through a competitive bid process and was contracted to complete this.

Methodology

Multiple data collection methods were used to measure perceptions regarding the mandate, structure, achievements and early impacts of the work undertaken by the MHCC from 2007, when it was created, to the end of December 2010. The information was collected through document review, key informant and focus group interviews with a variety of stakeholders, as well as through an online survey of partners and collaborators of the MHCC across Canada.

The evaluation was organized into two phases. Phase one was completed in December 2010. From this a Level 1 Logic Model for the overall implementation of the Commission was developed, along with Level 2 Logic Models for each of the five key initiatives. Phase two began in January 2011 and included a complete review of all project documentation, key informant interviews (30-35), focus groups (3-4) and a survey.

Findings and Recommendations

Overall, the evaluation findings suggest that the MHCC is an important addition to the mental health landscape in Canada and that the work of the MHCC is aligned with its vision and mandate. The findings also stated that the organization is fulfilling its role as a catalyst for change in Canada and that its five key initiatives are the right priorities. The evaluation also noted that the MHCC is successful in establishing:

- A governance structure that generally contributes to MHCC outputs;
- Five key initiatives, in varying stages of development and implementation;
- Strong Advisory Committees in eight different content areas with expert chairs and members contributing to a multitude of successful projects;



- A passionate and experienced Executive Leadership Team, an expert and committed staff and involvement of people with lived experience, families and caregivers in various components of the Commission's work;
- A business and strategic planning process for measuring and reporting on performance over time;
- Numerous and effective communication tools for raising awareness of mental health and illness (i.e. newsletters, speaking engagements, media releases and website); and
- Linkages and partnerships with provincial, territorial and national partners and organizations.

The report also states that the Commission should:

- Proceed with full implementation of the Knowledge Exchange Center and Partners for Mental Health initiative to the same extent as the other initiatives;
- Fulfill the pan-Canadian mandate by ensuring focused engagement with all regions, including those currently less actively involved;
- Increase communication and promotion about Mental Health First Aid to build awareness;
- Review evidence based models of governance;
- Focus on building a model workplace; and
- Continue to increase communication and engagement with groups perceived as poorly represented.

Action Plan

The Executive Leadership Team accepts the recommendations, and is pleased that the evaluation confirmed the important impact the MHCC is having across the country. The evaluation also identified areas which require improvement and we are addressing these areas, and monitoring our progress, which will be captured in our Annual Report, board reports and annual business plan. The following is a summary of some of the actions we are taking:

- The Knowledge Exchange Centre (KEC), which has recruited experienced leadership to direct this initiative, is now executing its business plan and working with partner organizations, groups and people to connect and build on the great work in the field of knowledge exchange across Canada.
- The Partners for Mental Health team is fully staffed and an agency has been hired to support implementation of a 2012 launch to increase public engagement around the issue of mental health.



- MHCC is developing a pan-Canadian stakeholder engagement strategy to ensure more balanced regional engagement. We are investing time and resources in public and external affairs to ensure we are well positioned to provide advice and counsel to our key stakeholders, including governments. We will be working very closely with all levels of government to support the adoption of the Mental Health Strategy for Canada and other key learning's and best practices.
- MHCC is currently working with Advisory Committee Chairs to jointly address structural and reporting mechanisms so that the work of the Advisory Committees is aligned more closely with key initiatives and the overall goals of the Commission.
- The KEC and Communications department are working across the Commission and with key external stakeholders to improve communications and dissemination of our work. Our website is undergoing a complete redevelopment to better meet the needs of the users and offer interactive ways to bring people and work together.
- Several activities are being implemented to ensure MHCC is a model workplace.
 - Performance dialogue process allows for staff and managers to assess and align staff skill sets with work and career opportunities.
 - MHCC has increased internal collaboration through organizational alignment, cross-cutting working groups and opportunities to be involved in key activities of the Commission such as the development of our internal operational plan.
 - Staff benefits have improved and contribute to staff work-life balance through formalization of flex work arrangements and a compressed summer work week.
- MHCC will continue to authentically engaging diverse groups in meaningful ways. Over the summer months, the Commission will bring representatives together, to identify ways in which we can increase their “voice” in the work of the MHCC.
- MHCC is very proud of the work of Mental Health First Aid and continues to support its increased awareness and growth. Mental Health First Aid program contributes to the work of MHCC through the reduction of stigma and improved mental health literacy.

This evaluation has been an important performance assessment for the Commission and we are encouraged by the results. I look forward to your ongoing support of the Mental Health Commission of Canada as we continue to work with thousands of people across Canada to transform the mental health care system.

Louise Bradley
President and CEO
Mental Health Commission of Canada