



**MEDIA ADVISORY**  
**For immediate release**

## **MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA ENGAGES ST. JOHN'S COMMUNITY ON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**

**Calgary, Alberta, September 8 2010** –The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) will be meeting with the St. John's local community and mental health stakeholders this week to discuss how to improve the national mental health system and the lives of people living with a mental illness. The MHCC will be holding its board meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland, from September 12-13, 2010.

MHCC President and CEO, Louise Bradley, originally from Newfoundland, will meet with a number of stakeholders to discuss local mental health issues. They include the Waterford Hospital, Stella Burry Community Services and the Canadian Mental Health Association. MHCC Chair, Michael Kirby, will meet with the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC), to discuss workplace mental health issues.

### **Meetings open to the media:**

- Thursday September 9, St. John's Rotary Club, Sheraton Hotel, 1:00 pm: Louise Bradley, MHCC President and CEO
- Friday September 10, St. John's East Rotary Club, Sheraton Hotel, 7:30 am: Michael Kirby, MHCC Chair

Entitled, 'Working Together to Eliminate Stigma and Discrimination in mental health', their speech will address the severity of mental illness, the effect of stigma and discrimination, mental health in the workplace, and how the MHCC is tackling these issues.

### **MHCC spokespeople are available for interviews on the following:**

**Louise Bradley, CEO and President, originally from Newfoundland:** Born and raised in St. John's, Louise Bradley's career started in Newfoundland. She became a Registered Nurse at Western Memorial Regional Hospital in Corner Brook where she became interested in psychiatric nursing. If you are interested in Louise and her career path from a local front-line worker to leading a national organization, please contact us for a detailed backgrounder.

**Developing Canada's first mental health strategy:** The MHCC met with stakeholders in St. John's in February 2009 as part of a Canada wide consultation to help develop a framework outlining seven goals for the strategy. Over the next two years, the MHCC will work with various people and groups across the country to develop the framework into a concrete mental health strategy for Canada.

**Stigma, a barrier to recovery:** Many people living with a mental illness report that stigma and discrimination causes them more suffering than the illness itself. Stigma exists everywhere including hospitals, schools and workplaces, and is often the biggest barrier to receiving treatment. *Opening Minds*, the MHCC's anti-stigma initiative, is carrying out research with health care providers, youth, media and the workforce to determine the most effective strategies for changing the attitudes and behaviours of Canadians towards those living with a mental illness.

**Mental Health First Aid training:** Similar to how first aid is given to address physical symptoms, it is possible to give effective mental health first aid to someone developing a mental health problem or who is in a mental health crisis. The MHCC offers Mental Health First Aid training across Canada. To date, 29,887 people have been trained as first aiders and 355 have become instructors. In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are 234 trained first-aiders and four instructors.

**Mental health in the workplace:** For the first time in Canadian history, employers are confronted with a legal duty to maintain not only a physically safe workplace, but also a *psychologically safe* work environment. In 2009 Martin Shain, PhD, prepared a report stating factors such as chronic stress, excessive demands and unpaid overtime in the workplace can cause mental injury and lead to legal liability. An update of this report, which states the situation has deteriorated, will be released at the end of September, 2010.

**Addressing homelessness and mental illness:** The MHCC's *At Home / Chez Soi* initiative is the largest research project of its kind in the world, with the goal of finding the best ways to help homeless people living with mental illness. Based on the *Housing First* approach, five Canadian cities (Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montréal and Moncton) are recruiting in total 2285 participants. Of those, 1325 homeless individuals living with mental illness will be given housing.

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**For media requests, contact:**

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