



NEWS RELEASE

MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA SEEKS INPUT FROM CANADIANS WITH NEW FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

CALGARY, February 11, 2009 - The Mental Health Commission of Canada today released a draft framework for the development of a mental health strategy for Canada. It is also asking for input from Canadians. *Toward Recovery and Well-Being* is the first document to be released for public discussion by the Commission since its creation in 2007.

Howard Chodos, Director of the Commission's Mental Health Strategy initiative explains that the Draft Framework Document details eight broad goals that will guide the development of the strategy. "We are excited at the prospect of engaging Canadians in a dialogue about transforming the mental health system in our country," he said.

The draft framework sets out a vision for WHAT a transformed mental health system should look like. It proposes a comprehensive approach to mental health, one that both fosters recovery for people living with mental health problems and illnesses, and promotes the mental health and well-being of all Canadians.

"We have decided to release the document in draft form so that we can gather feedback on the framework from people from coast to coast to coast," said Chodos. "Once we finalize the framework with the help of the mental health community and interested Canadians, we will be able to move on to the second phase – producing a roadmap for HOW to achieve the eight goals for transforming the mental health system in our country."

Beginning immediately, Canadians are being invited to comment on the eight goals contained in the draft document. A special on-line workbook will guide members of the public through the document, and invite them to share their views.

Chodos is also taking the draft Framework Document on the road. The Commission will host small working meetings with mental health stakeholders in eleven communities across the country. These consultations began February 3 in St. John's, Newfoundland and have so far taken place in Halifax and Ottawa. During February and March, Chodos and the Mental Health Strategy team will also visit Thunder Bay, Toronto, Regina, Vancouver, Montreal, Yellowknife, Edmonton and Iqaluit.

Following these consultations the Framework Document will be revised and a final version will be released in the late spring.

"I am looking forward to the input we receive through this collaborative process," says Chodos. "Judging by the many signs of growing public interest in mental health issues, the momentum for change is



building. Working together, we *will* be able to transform our current mental health system and enhance the mental health and well-being of all Canadians.”

To complete the workbook and take part in the on-line feedback, go to:
www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/strategy

The Mental Health Commission of Canada was established by the Government of Canada in response to the final report on mental health and mental illness by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Out of the Shadows At Last*. The report called for a profound transformation of Canada’s mental health system and recommended that the Commission lead the development of a mental health strategy to accomplish this objective. The Senate Committee was chaired by Senator Michael Kirby, who now chairs the Mental Health Commission. Howard Chodos served as the Research Director for the Senate Committee during the time the report was prepared.

In addition to producing a mental health strategy, the Commission is currently pursuing four other strategic initiatives: a ten-year effort to combat stigma and discrimination; building a pan-Canadian mental health knowledge exchange infrastructure; creating a broadly-based organization of mental health volunteers; and conducting research demonstration projects on homelessness and mental illness in five cities.

For more information, please contact: Micheal Pietrus, Director of Communications, Mental Health Commission of Canada: 403-385-4040