

EVENTS

“Youth Mental Health and the Justice System Conference”

Fairmont,
Winnipeg

October 25-
October 27

“Giving Voice: Advocacy and mental health”

University of
Alberta,
Edmonton

November 9

“Into the Light: Transforming our approach to mental health in Canada”

Fairmont,
Vancouver

November 29-
December 1

Commission launches ‘Opening Minds’



MHCC Chair Michael Kirby (r) and Greg Quinn from the Schizophrenia Society unveil the new logo for the Opening Minds initiative.

The new name for the Commission’s Anti-stigma / Anti-discrimination initiative was launched in style on Friday October 2 in Calgary, Alberta. Opening Minds is the largest systematic effort in Canadian history to reduce the stigma of mental illness.

The Opening Minds launch took place atop the Calgary Tower as the sun came up and a new day dawned with the hope of a stigma-free Canada. The flame on the tower was lit from 6:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. to symbolically bring mental illness out of the shadows forever, and to draw the attention of downtown commuters.

The early start did not phase the guests and there was clearly a buzz on the observation deck of the tower. Business leaders, people who work in the mental health field, and people who have first-hand experience of stigma gathered to witness Michael Kirby officially launch the initiative and unveil the Opening Minds / Changer les Mentalités identity.

“More than seven million Canadians will experience a mental health problem in 2009. Many of these people will not seek help because of the stigma,” says Kirby. “In fact, people who live with mental illness tell us that the stigma is often worse than the disease itself.”

The launch ceremony also included a speech from Suzan Desserud from the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta, Calgary Chapter. Suzan spoke about the stigma she faced from health-care professionals both before and after she was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

She also commended the Commission on launching the Opening Minds initiative.

To watch the speeches by Michael Kirby and Suzan Desserud and to see more pictures from the event please visit:

www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/openingminds

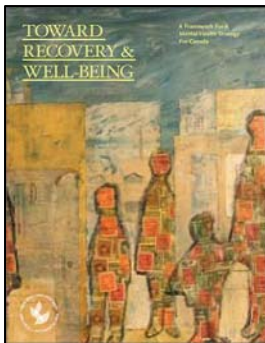


The flame atop the Calgary Tower is lit to symbolize the dawn of a new day.

Mental Health Strategy Update

The final version of *Toward Recovery and Well-Being: A Framework for a Mental Health Strategy for Canada* will be launched in November. The Goals within the Framework reflect the input of Canadians through extensive consultations during the winter and spring of 2009. The Director of the Mental Health Strategy for Canada initiative, Howard Chodos, says: “We are extremely grateful for the energy, enthusiasm and dedication of Canadians from all walks of life who took the time to share their views.”

Participants expressed strong support for the vision set out in the draft document and for each of the goals. Many suggestions were also made that have helped to strengthen the Framework. The Framework will now be used to guide the second phase of mental health strategy development, which will focus on HOW to achieve the goals within diverse settings and population groups. Through a collaborative approach, it is hoped it will be possible to transform the mental health “system” and to dramatically alter the way Canadians think about mental health and mental illness.



This Framework proposes seven linked goals for a transformed mental health system:

People of all ages living with mental health problems and illnesses are actively engaged and supported in their journey of recovery and well-being.

Mental health is promoted and mental health problems and illnesses are prevented wherever possible.

The mental health system responds to the diverse needs of all people living in Canada.

The role of families in promoting well-being and providing care is recognized, and their needs are supported.

People have equitable and timely access to appropriate and effective programs, treatments, services and supports that are seamlessly integrated around their needs.

Actions are based on diverse sources of knowledge and evidence, outcomes are measured, and research is advanced.

People living with mental health problems and illnesses are fully included as valued members of society.

MHCC President meets inspirational family

When the Thompson family rolled into Toronto in July, MHCC President and CEO Michael Howlett joined many others at a public event to offer support for Mel Thompson’s ride across Canada.

“It was inspiring to meet Mel and his family, and to witness their determination to increase awareness about mental health issues,” says Mr. Howlett.

In January, Mel Thompson decided to help raise awareness by cycling across Canada from Vancouver to St. John’s. “We want to encourage people not to judge others because of their differences,” said Thompson. His ride ended in St. John’s in August and his campaign has raised \$175,000 so far. Thompson’s inspiration came from his daughter Lindsay, who lives with a mental illness. She joined her father for parts of the journey.



Michael Howlett (r) meets Mel Thompson during his ride across Canada for mental health.

Economic Recession Compared to Hurricane Katrina

The impact of the economic recession on mental health is similar to a natural disaster, like Hurricane Katrina, according to Kathryn Power, Director of SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). She was one of 28 international representatives attending an economic roundtable organized by the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

The meeting entitled, *The Impact of the Recession on the Mental Health of Workers and their Families*, was held to find out which issues are common across the globe and what can be done to improve the mental health of those people who have been acutely affected.

Mental health and public policy experts from five countries attended the meeting in Ottawa to discuss the impact of the

recession on mental health. Discussions were led by MHCC Chair, Michael Kirby.

Presentations were delivered by representatives from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, USA and the UK.

A number of common themes emerged from the roundtable relating to job losses and people being worried about their job security. Representatives from all countries reported an increase in family violence and the number of people seeking help, particularly young men. In addition, services have reported more people coming forward from the middle class, a group who have not typically sought help in the past.

Please visit the MHCC web site to read a full report on the findings.



Kathryn Power, Director of SAMHSA, presented at the Commission's international economic roundtable.

Congratulations!

Members of the MHCC family recently won awards for their contribution in the area of mental health.

Loïse Forest, member of the Service System Advisory Committee was awarded the CMHA (Canadian Mental Health Association) Consumer Involvement Award at the Finale Dinner, Ottawa.

Laurie Hall, also a member of the Service Systems Advisory Committee, received a Champion of Mental Health Award.

MHCC Chair, Michael Kirby, was presented with an honorary Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA) membership and Board member, David Goldbloom was recognized as a Fellow of the CPA at the 59th Annual Conference in St. John's.

Development of MHCC Knowledge Exchange Center

Work is underway to develop a Knowledge Exchange Centre (KEC) for the Commission. The KEC will enable information about mental health to be shared across the country by many types of users.

The aim is to engage a range of stakeholders during the development phase, including people living with a mental illness, researchers, service providers and policy makers to ensure the KEC meets their needs. This process has already begun under the leadership of Elliot Goldner, Chair of the Science Advisory Committee, and Sapna Mahajan, Manager, Special Projects.

The Commission is currently identifying knowledge exchange activities already taking place in Canada. 'Environmental scans' are being done in both French and English communities. Each activity is being evaluated according to cost, feasibility, impact and mandate.



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The Mental Health Commission of Canada will:

- Be a catalyst for the reform of mental health policies and improvements in service delivery;
- Act as a facilitator, enabler and supporter of a national approach to mental health issues;
- Work to diminish the stigma and discrimination faced by Canadians living with mental illness;
- Disseminate evidence-based information on all aspects of mental health and mental illness to governments, stakeholders and the public.

At home / Chez Soi national training event



Interested participants listen to presentation

Close to 150 people from across Canada attended the first national At Home / Chez Soi project training event in Toronto in September.

In partnership with 'Pathways to Housing' in New York, and 'Streets to Homes' in Toronto, people took part in presentations and workshops over a 3-day period. The event was a chance to further outline various roles and train all

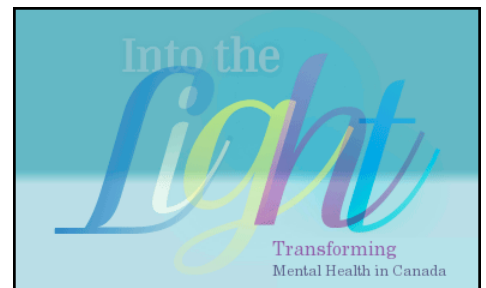
partners in this large five-city project, from researchers to front line service providers. The energy at the sessions was palpable, and many participants left feeling armed and ready to forge ahead.

The At Home / Chez Soi project is investigating the best mix of housing and support services to help people who are homeless and living with a mental illness.

New web site for business leaders

A new web site aimed at improving mental health in the workplace was launched at the CSTD (Canadian Society for Training and Development) conference on October 21, 2009 in Toronto, Ontario. Developed by the MHCC with assistance from the Great Life Centre of Mental Health in the Workplace, it targets senior business and labour leaders, such as CEOs and Union Leaders.

The web site provides practical, high level information to make the business case, set strategic direction and identify a champion for making changes to improve mental health in the workplace. Resources that support the mental health champion are also provided. **Visit the new web site at www.mhccleadership.ca**



A national conference on mental health reform in Canada
Early bird registration deadline
November 2!
To register go to:
www.intothelightcanada.com