



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Sudbury/Manitoulin

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
Sudbury/Manitoulin

Canadian Mental Health Association – Sudbury / Manitoulin

Presentation to the

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Public Hearings / Sudbury Ontario / January 21st 2015



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Speaker: Patty MacDonald , Director of Operations, CMHA – S/M

Mr. or Madam Chair and honorable members of the committee,

On behalf of the individuals served by the Canadian Mental Health Association – Sudbury / Manitoulin branch, I thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I will begin with a story to highlight the profound impact that certain decisions and system transformation is having in our community.

This is the story of one woman. She could be any one of us - our mother, our sister, our daughter. We will call her “Pauline”, which is not her real name. Pauline is an individual living with mental health challenges, who lived in a long term hospital care setting until she was finally able to access housing in her own community.

Housing and other supports in the community contributed to Pauline being able to receive the services she required and avoid being hospitalized. However in less than a year she was diagnosed with cancer. Facing serious health challenges, she went into treatment. Fortunately, she was able to go home much sooner, thanks to having a home with housemates and supports both at home and in the community to return back to.

As part of her hospital discharge plan we were able to engage with community supports such as the Slow Pace Rehabilitation program at Extendicare York, (NE CCAC) North East Community Care Access Centre nursing and homemaking, and Red Cross for transportation support just to name a few.

For Pauline, access to housing which was closer to home in Sudbury, and closer to her family, helped them to help her, while she received treatment.

This story is one example of how we are working with our partners in alignment with one of the Ontario government's central initiatives,

“Putting Patients at the Centre — the Right Care, Right Place, Right Time”

Though our vocabulary for individuals accessing our services may differ from that of other providers, we are all working for the same population. Patients, clients, individuals experiencing mental health challenges – they need all of us to continue to innovate in changing how we offer services. We understand and are experiencing that more and more, stories like Pauline's have positive outcomes when there is collaboration across sectors.

The World Health Organization states that

“The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.”

At the local municipal level, the City of Greater Sudbury's Housing and Homelessness Background Study highlights prominent factors contributing to homelessness in Sudbury.¹ These include mental health issues and many other factors experienced such as family and relationship breakdowns, unemployment, conflicts with the law, obstacles to accessing suitable housing and evictions for various reasons. Housing challenges are powerful Determinants of Health for these individuals. Without suitable housing and the supports that individuals require day-to-day, it is sometimes virtually impossible to help individuals gain or return to mental health. Housing providers know that persons with mental health issues may have difficulty adhering to the rules of social housing buildings, and may also lack the life skills to maintain a household.

Evidence shows that communities where individuals enjoy mental health, resilience and inclusivity are strong sustainable communities. We are partnering with service providers across governments and across systems in our communities. We sense that the Ontario government's leadership on collaboration will require service providers to enter into a new phase of development to the benefit of the people who look to us in their times of greatest need.

“Collaborating on Shared Responsibilities across Government”, one of Ontario's key priorities, has been a discussion point in our circles for some time. We have experience in this type of initiative and look to our government and ministry leaders to continue to support us in this complex work. We know that the delivery of co-ordinated, timely and quality services, the next phase of the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, will require this type of partnering.

¹ <http://www.greatersudbury.ca/?LinkServID=15A85CA0-B842-07CA-974BE1C689A0A396> and <http://www.greatersudbury.ca/inside-city-hall/official-plan/background-studies1/housingstudy/>

Collaborating has enabled us to meet our commitments to getting results with new funding. One example is our successful partnership through our Community Mobilization Sudbury (CMS) program. This program is a community partnership representing key sectors in the human services system such as health, children's services, policing, education, mental health and addictions, and municipal services. The collective efforts of nineteen partners coming together around a common need and desire to build multi-sectoral and collaborative mechanisms for responding to situations of acutely elevated risk. It is recognized that the CMS model is an investment of resources "upstream" in the coordinated prevention of negative outcomes, rather than a "downstream" response to harmful incidents once they have occurred. These early interventions have demonstrated their potential to reduce the need for more intensive and "enforcement-based" responses such as hospitalizations, arrests and apprehensions.

75% of mental health care happens outside the formal health system. Across sectors, service providers are being asked to "Move Forward on Social and Affordable Housing". Our agency is one of the largest providers of housing for individuals experiencing significant mental health challenges in our community. We have been able to make strides in this area thanks to our funders and the support for innovative solutions brought forward by our staff, members of the community and our partners.

For individuals living with mental health challenges, the idea of being able to access services through Community Hubs, as the government of Ontario is now asking of municipalities, sounds promising. Though this may not meet all of the needs of our clients in rural and remote areas, we look forward to being a part of the evolution of this concept.

We know that at least 1 in 3 residents of Northeastern Ontario experiences a mental health issue in their lifetime. Based on nation-wide estimates and 2012 population figures, the Annual Economic Cost of mental illness in the Northeast is \$730,000,000 (730 Million). Of great concern is the fact that approximately 3.0% of the population actually has a severe and persistent mental illness.

When we consider that individuals with severe mental illnesses are also more likely to be homeless, it makes sense that our local statistics show that 36% to 51% of homeless people in Sudbury also experienced mental illness. They are homeless for longer periods of time and have less contact with family and friends. They encounter more barriers to employment and are in poorer health than other homeless people and individuals living in poverty.

We appreciate the opportunity at this time, to highlight the need for additional supports and in a variety of housing options for persons with mental illness. Studies

show that in our area there is a need for an additional 350 supported and supportive housing units for persons with mental illness in Greater Sudbury and the districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin.

Though positive changes are clearly occurring, the individuals we serve continue to struggle with access to services, partly due to the fragmentation and silo realities of the varying systems. They may encounter this when trying to access counseling and treatment, affordable housing and especially in times of crisis and potential suicide.

We as service providers must learn and be supported, to collaborate and combine our resources to continue and multiply the instances of positive change occurring for our population. The decisions we make, the resources we are able to provide, and the face-to-face services we deliver contribute to healthier lives for individuals living with mental illnesses and at times the impact is as profound as the prevention of a death by suicide or other preventable means.

Vern Harper, whose son Vincent was found dead in an alleyway this summer and whose story made national headlines due to the video which unfortunately surfaced, shares, "He was a good person. He just got lost on the way." Vincent Harper struggled with substance abuse and was in fact homeless.

The Sudbury Manitoulin branch of the CMHA supports government initiatives and infrastructure enhancements aimed at the following outcomes for all persons living with the high risks that come hand in hand with mental health challenges and illness:

1. Increased community supports and services
2. Sufficient affordable, safe housing
3. Care and community services as close to home as possible.

Where additional mental health and addictions funding is given to a community agency to provide supports in the community, it is crucial that the infrastructure be able to sustain services such as cost of living increases to employees, support services, heat, hydro and rent, and remain viable.

The Government of Ontario has highlighted the importance of enhancing mental health and addictions in the Action Plan for Health Care and the 10-year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. At this time, we are still striving to support individuals and communities struggling with the gaps in services and supports.

Whenever our Branch announces a new housing opening, there are approximately 30 people lined up at the door, hoping they will be one of the fortunate ones. It is our vision however; that all the people we serve will participate in a healthy society. We strive for this through our Mission, “ to continually improve community based mental health supports to facilitate the well-being of all people.”

On behalf of the individuals we serve, the Board and Staff of the CMHA – Sudbury Manitoulin looks forward to continued capacity enhancements in services for all people facing mental health challenges now and in the future.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the individuals served by the Canadian Mental Health Association – Sudbury / Manitoulin branch,

Patty MacDonald

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