



Mood Disorders Society of Canada

La Société Pour **Les Troubles de L'Humeur** du Canada



WHO WE ARE

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) is one of Canada's best-connected mental health Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). We have a demonstrated track record of forging and maintaining meaningful and sustained partnerships with the public, private and non-profit sectors throughout Canada.

MDSC is engaged on an ongoing basis in a wide range of projects and initiatives designed to support the inclusion of persons with mental illnesses in Canadian society. We have taken a lead, proactive role in public policy and program development in many capacities on the national stage.

MDSC's overall objective is to provide people with mood disorders with a strong, cohesive voice at the national level by:

- Raising awareness that mood disorders are treatable medical issues
- Eliminating barriers to full community participation and reducing discrimination and stigma
- Building a national clearinghouse of information and resources related to mood disorders
- Advocating for the creation of adequate and accessible stigma-free programs for Canadians affected by illness
- Ensuring that the voices of Persons With Lived Experience (PWLE) and family members are accurately understood and communicated on issues of national importance

OUR OBJECTIVE

Our objective is to facilitate the re-envisioning of mental healthcare in Canada to reflect the realities of those living with mental illness while supporting ALL Canadians by delivering accessible, high quality and stigma-free services.



THE WHY

Prior to the pandemic, statistics showed that one in three Canadians would experience addiction and/or mental health challenges at some point in their lifetime. Instances of depression and anxiety further increase for individuals under 30 years old. The economic burden of mental illness in Canada is estimated at over \$51 billion per year and is only expected to grow.

The mental health of Canadians has been seriously affected by this pandemic and research has shown a rise in these statistics across the board. The mental health and substance use crisis that existed before the pandemic has only grown in human impact and is straining our healthcare system.

Our national leaders must re-envision how we address mental health and mental illness across Canada.

We cannot rely on an already over-burdened healthcare system to support the mental health demands of Canadians. Opiate-related deaths have reached record levels, distress call-centres have received record calls, and wait times for professional support have only become longer.

To support Canadians' mental health, the government should invest in community support organizations that have a demonstrated track record of delivering quality, person-centric care for those living with mental illness. Taking steps to empower these organizations will alleviate some of the burden and cost of primary care services in Canada.

We are also witnessing a significant disparity between middle and low-income Canadians when accessing vital medications for treatment. Those Canadians with no private benefit plans are financially restricted from accessing innovative medications that are not publicly funded. We can no longer rely on a dated healthcare system where employment and/or economic status dictates who is able to obtain medication that they need to restore and maintain wellness.

The government must invest in supporting new research for advanced medications and improved access to mental illness treatments through publicly funded plans. These crucial policy decisions will support Canadians in overcoming their mental illness and live fulfilling lives. In doing so, it will empower them to fully engage in the workforce and to support our economy.

To ensure new healthcare policies are patient-centred, a new collaborative approach to policy improvements must be inclusive of Canadians with lived experience in all consultations and decision-making processes. This is especially the case when it comes to determining the future of mental health and substance use care. MDSC strongly believes that mental health research that specifically excludes PWLE should no longer be something taxpayers should fund. PWLE need to be included in all phases of research not just the subject of the study. Personal experience, knowledge and expertise along with their ability to disseminate knowledge generated by the results of the research are imperative to its overall success.

OUR ASKS

- Establish an annual mental health fund to support mental health NGOs and community mental health organizations with an eye on collaborative partnerships. Funding would support developing, replicating and providing innovative resources, programs, services and supports. This would lessen the burden and cost on primary health care services within Canada.
- Support research and innovation on new medications to bring new innovative treatments forward to support individuals impacted with mental illness.
- Implement federal policy to ensure that all government funded research related to mental illness require consultation with Canadians who have a lived experience at the leadership level.

