



Mood Disorders Society of Canada
Société pour **les troubles de l'humeur** du Canada



CANADIAN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS ROUNDTABLE REPORT

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“NURSES, PARAMEDICS, AND PHYSICIANS HAVE BEEN ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WHILE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS ARE ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE MENTAL HEALTH EPIDEMIC, THAT WORSENS BY THE WEEK.”



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOLLOWING AN INITIAL SERIES OF ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS WITH TEN REGIONAL COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN 2021, MDSC UNDERTOOK A MORE EXTENSIVE DIRECT CONSULTATION WITH A LARGER NUMBER OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE SUPPORTS THEY OFFER TO THEIR COMMUNITIES, THE SUCCESSES THEY ARE SEEING, THE BARRIERS THEY ARE WORKING WITH, AND THE POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS THEY BELIEVE WOULD SOLVE THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE.

MDSC strives to facilitate a pan-Canadian network of regional organizations that are essential in delivering high-quality and impactful mental health services, to work towards better leveraging their services and supports and to advocate for these organizations' objectives, to ensure they are supported to provide these needed services within their communities.





INTRODUCTION

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) is a national, registered, not-for-profit, health charity committed to ensuring that people affected by mood disorders enjoy the fullest, most productive lives possible, within a healthy, stigma-free environment.

MDSC has evolved to become one of Canada's best-connected mental health Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with a demonstrated track record for forging and maintaining meaningful and sustained partnerships with the public, private and non-profit sectors throughout Canada. MDSC was formally launched and incorporated in 2001 with the overall objective of providing people with mood disorders with a strong, cohesive voice at the national level to improve access to treatment, inform research, and shape program development and government policies with the goal of improving the quality of life for people affected by mood disorders. MDSC has grown out of the vision and drive of persons with direct lived experience and leaders from across Canada who, in 1995, saw the need for a broad-based structure to bring People with Lived Experience together and who believe that we have a key role to play with regard to education and advocacy at the national level.

Mental illnesses impact nearly every Canadian, either directly, or indirectly through a family member, friend, or colleague. We have seen these illnesses cause immeasurable harm within our communities and the pace at which we have strived to meet these challenges has not been effective enough to slow down the devastation that has resulted.

According to the **2002 Report on Mental Illnesses in Canada**, the economic cost of mental illnesses in Canada was estimated to be at least \$7.331 billion in 1993. **Comparatively, in 2013**, the economic costs skyrocketed and were estimated at over **\$50 billion per year**. This included healthcare costs, lost productivity, and reductions in health-related quality of life. **For 2021**, it is projected to be close to \$80 billion in providing treatment, care and support services for people with mental health problems and illnesses.

MDSC has dedicated its existence to tackling mental illness and supporting those impacted. Our efforts have always been centered on the patient, ensuring that the lived and living experiences of people with mental illness are included as equals at all decision-making tables. We prioritize working collaboratively with other mental health groups, professionals, health care providers, academia, and the public and private sectors. Mental illness strikes all of us indiscriminately, making us all equal stakeholders, all having roles and contributions to evolving solutions.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

Over the past decades, MDSC collaborated and worked with hundreds of mental health organizations and stakeholder groups. We have sat with them in meetings, worked on projects together, supported groups through national campaigns, collaborated with many on mental health research initiatives, advocated together to improve services, and held consultations on priorities and gaps.

One of the most important things that we have learned over the last 20 years is that there are incredibly dedicated and devoted mental health organizations throughout the country. These range from larger, interconnected groups, to regional and local mental health organizations that are independent. Often borne out of a group of local people who, many years earlier, had seen the need to support persons and families who were struggling. Over the years, often through fundraising initiatives, these groups have seen their programs and resources become a vital service within their community.

These organizations deliver crucial programs that offer education, assist in resiliency, and provide resources and training that enable citizens to understand these illnesses, realize the symptoms and coping mechanisms, and learn and engage in wellness activities that help maintain wellness and recovery.

Often, these organizations are working long hours and placing extra efforts to keep up with increasing demands for help. These groups are delivering significant, important mental health care service to hundreds of thousands of Canadians each year. We wanted to bring their experiences, voices, successes, and knowledge together. We all have a great deal we can learn from them.

In 2021, MDSC undertook a series of roundtable meetings with a group of community-based mental health organizations, to learn firsthand about the programs they offer to their communities, the challenges and barriers they face in their day-to-day work, and where there might be opportunities for further collaboration to address the aforementioned barriers. These roundtables produced the *Pan-Canadian Community Mental Health Network Report: Preliminary report*, and a series of findings and subsequent recommendations to government,

on how to better support these organizations across the country that work to assist and support Canadians living with mental illness and mental health struggles.

The preliminary findings are outlined as follows:

1. Community organizations are strong innovators when it comes to developing new programs and services.
2. These community mental health organizations struggle across the board; peer-led charitable and non-profit organizations struggled to secure core, operational and sustained funding.
3. Community organizations face structural difficulties when recruiting and retaining talent.
4. Improved coordination and referrals between community organizations and primary care providers strengthen mental health care strategies and improve accessibility.
5. Improved communication and coordination between community organizations would strengthen available programs and services.
6. Closer working relationships between health care providers and community mental health organizations would lessen primary care demands, lower wait times, would increase access to ongoing crucial support resources for citizens.



Based on these findings, and on the data gathered through the roundtable meetings and a follow-up survey, the preliminary report offered the following recommendations:

- 1.** Support a Pan-Canadian network of peer-led community organizations.
- 2.** Support this network to develop a mechanism and process to share knowledge, training, resources, and programming throughout the network.
- 3.** Encourage expanded membership within the network to grow a pool of available resources and programs for all to access.
- 4.** Provide community peer-led organizations with sustained funding support, recognizing the crucial role they provide in mental health care, enabling their organizations to solidify their capacity to meet growing community demands and alleviate burdens they face.

FOLLOWING THIS INITIAL RESEARCH, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE WAS FURTHER RESEARCH AND INFORMATION TO GATHER ON THE STATE OF COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS, AND TO FURTHER CONNECT WITH ORGANIZATIONS TO WIDEN THE PAN-CANADIAN REVIEW. AS SUCH, MDSC UNDERTOOK AN ADDITIONAL SERIES OF ROUNDTABLES WITH A WIDER AUDIENCE, TO FURTHER UNDERSTAND THE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE THROUGH THESE ORGANIZATIONS, AND CHALLENGES THEY FACE, AND WHERE THERE MIGHT EXIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREATER COLLABORATION BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS, BUT ALSO BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE CANADIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM. IN TOTAL, 48 ORGANIZATIONS FROM ALL PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES PARTICIPATED IN THE ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS. A FULL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX A.



METHODOLOGY

Each roundtable meeting consisted of 4-6 organizations, along with representatives from MDSC and Impact Public Affairs, who facilitated the discussion. Participants were asked:

1. What is a program (new or existing) that your organization has implemented to support your community?
2. What are some of the major barriers facing your organization or organizations like yours?
3. MDSC believes that opportunities to improve the wellness of communities could be better presented to the federal government through pan-Canadian collaboration. What actions could levels of government take to best support community organizations across the country?

Participants were also asked to complete a detailed survey to collect further descriptive details regarding their responses and contributions to the above themes.

“...THE PROGRAMS WE ARE DOING NEED MORE SUPPORT...
WE WANT TO GET PEOPLE OFF WAITLISTS. WE ARE SEEING MANY MORE CLIENTS COME FORWARD THAT HAVE NO WAY OF PAYING FOR COUNSELLING.”

FINDINGS

The pandemic has clearly illuminated the mental health crisis, with primary care providers being overwhelmed by the demands for mental health services, and mental health professionals being unable to accommodate the growing numbers of patients. 70% of Canadians say that their mental health has worsened since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to **MDSC's National Mental Health Care System survey** that included 1,919 respondents.

At the same time, many who are seeking mental health services are not always able to get the help due to cost, and/or lack of sufficient insurance benefits to help offset the cost—in addition to there being discouragingly long wait times for services. 62% of respondents in MDSC's national survey say that access to mental health care services has been reduced since the beginning of the pandemic. For a majority of respondents, especially among stakeholders, cost is increasingly a significant barrier to accessing required support and treatment.

A lack of resources for mental health care in primary healthcare settings means that more and more Canadians are looking elsewhere for help. As a result, community mental health organizations have seen a flood of new patients or clients utilizing their services. In more instances than not, these smaller, community-based organizations are stepping up to fill the gaps in the mental health care system, by offering resources, programs, services and coping tools to those seeking mental health support. As one organization pointed out, “Nurses, paramedics, and physicians have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, while community mental health organizations are on the frontlines of the mental health epidemic, that worsens by the week.”

These community mental health organizations are providing crucial services, in the majority of instances, without equivalent funding or resources available to other healthcare sectors. Many participants stated that they exist in stressful environments and face an uncertain future—high levels of concern about accessing sustained, core funding to operate; uncertain about recruiting and maintaining qualified staff; and uncertain about being able to cover operational expenditures and keep the lights on every day.

The community organization roundtable consultations highlighted an impressive number of innovative programs and services by all the participating organizations, ranging from counselling and psychotherapy, to peer support and services, to more targeted services for specific issues like suicide prevention and grief counselling, housing and employment training and supports, or for communities and other groups, like 2SLGBTQ+, or programs targeting specific gender, ages, and/or other demographics. The in-depth discussions at these meetings highlighted some of the key issues facing these organizations.

THESE CONSULTATIONS SHED LIGHT ON THE SEVERAL KEY PROCESSES AND POLICY IMPROVEMENTS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT THAT CAN BETTER ENABLE AND ASSIST THESE ORGANIZATIONS HAVE THE FOUNDATIONAL ABILITY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CANADIANS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.



The key issues, as outlined by the organizations in the roundtable meetings are:

- 1.** The overwhelming majority of these organizations detailed the lack of reliable, sustained, core funding to cover basic operational needs
- 2.** Lack of support to advance and expand key successful programs and services
- 3.** Understanding the need for evidence-based programs, yet not having the resources to have academic evaluations of many successful programs, because they are struggling with maintaining organization expenditures and cannot afford the research component
- 4.** Without realistic, fair and consistent funding support, many organizations expressed serious concerns for knowledge and experiential retention. Difficulties in recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified staff is of paramount concern. These organizations must be able to properly and fairly compensate their staff
- 5.** Canada needs a pan-Canadian strategy on knowledge retention and human resources for our community mental health care organizations. The long-standing realities of not being able to offer employment stability has led to a nationwide employee recruitment and retention problem. This strategy should provide standards for recruiting career-seeking graduates of universities and colleges and being able to offer them a rewarding career that matches the recruitment activities of the private or other healthcare sectors offerings. It should also include career professional development programs to maintain staffing growth and training.

There were also some positive findings that stemmed from the roundtable meetings, outlining several approaches that have worked well so far, and would benefit everyone if they were able to continue and be expanded upon. This includes:

- 1.** Increased opportunities for collaboration between organizations. The majority of organizations expressed their enthusiastic agreement in their willingness to create a pan-Canadian peer community mental health organization network, enabling regional organizations of different groups to collaborate and share/support each other's knowledge, training, programs, and services.
- 2.** Increased collaboration with the primary healthcare system. While many of the organizations detailed their local working relationships with mental health professionals and primary care physicians within their communities, there are strong opportunities to support these organizations and implement better professional referrals to the less-costly, longer-term local organization services.

HOSPITAL

HOSPITALS DON'T HAVE TO FUNDRAISE TO KEEP THE LIGHTS ON, BUT WE DO

Adequate core operational funding remains an elusive requirement for most, if not all, community mental health organizations. This is the foundational funding they need to be able to cover their salaries, rent, office expenses, utilities, phone, Internet communications and IT, and generally function day-to-day. While most other healthcare organizations have core funding through government healthcare funding, programs, and investments, community mental health organizations are often entirely reliant on fundraising, applying for the private sector and government project grants, or donations from the community in order to function. With limited opportunity for multi-year agreements with either the provincial/territorial or federal governments, many organizations are forced to apply for grants on an annual basis in order to operate.

One organization offers counselling and support to 2SLGBTQ+ communities and stated: “We’ve had a history of chasing funding and creating programs to fit the funding, rather than to fit the community...” Similarly, another organization, who offers programs for youth to prepare and support them as they grow toward adulthood, said that funding applications usually take whatever shape the funder is seeking, and that, “...the funding applications that you’re writing, you’re not writing what you really need, you’re writing what is [attractive] to the funder.” This was **consistent across all organizations**, with many saying that they too create programs to meet the requirements of funding opportunities, in order to increase their chances of getting the funding, rather than building programs based on the needs of their communities.

The majority of these organizations acknowledge spending a significant amount of senior staff time researching private foundations, corporate sponsorship websites and government agencies, seeking opportunities where they can apply for funding. These are often project-specific grants, and within these applications, it often does not allow for operational and administration overhead costs.

Developing a proposal for funding is mostly time-constrained, with a few weeks to create and submit full proposals. Many of these proposals can take two staff members weeks of preparation and research. During this time, the staff members are pulled away from their organization’s daily tasks to concentrate on the proposals. This is time taken away from providing support to those in their communities.

While organizations can typically develop and submit many proposal submissions annually, many are turned down. Often with the caveat response from the funder indicating, “we have received a high number of applicants, your proposal was well written, we need to make hard choices, try again next year.” However, without the funding, the organizations may need to close programs and reduce services, and not be able to try again next year.



OVER **80%** OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WE SPOKE WITH SAID THAT THEY EITHER STRUGGLE TO COVER OPERATIONAL FUNDING, OR DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH OPERATIONAL FUNDING TO BE ABLE TO COVER ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS, MAINTAIN STAFF, AND OPERATE COMFORTABLY. **72%** SAID THAT THEY WERE UNABLE TO ACQUIRE ADEQUATE OPERATIONAL FUNDING AT ALL.

One participant pointed out that for many organizations, including theirs, “finding recurrent, stable funding or new additional funding is always a challenge because we have a lot of community organizations that are all trying to eat from the same pie and that pie never gets any bigger and the demands and the needs are always getting bigger.”

Many rely primarily on community donations to be able to operate, with one stating that, “...current funding models from government are playing whack-a-mole,” and not allocating funds in a way that allows smaller, community-based organizations to be able to easily access those dollars. Another organization stated that a **designated, flexible segment of government funding for only community mental health organizations to access would be most helpful.**

This would reduce the burden on many organizations to hunt for operational funding on a monthly or yearly basis, and allocate funds to organizations that otherwise get overlooked, to allow them to access the money they need to operate.

NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER

Almost all of the organizations stated that the local demands for their services had increased significantly since the start of the pandemic, which presented additional challenges. Half of the organizations stated that they are unable to acquire adequate funding to be able to run their existing programs or to expand their services to meet new community needs.

In many cases, these organizations are the ones that are filling the gaps in the mental health care system, and assist in reducing wait times within the community. Many Canadians who are looking for resources, peer support programs, employment training, and assistance, or need counselling services, rely on these organizations. Without reliable funding, community mental health organizations will not be able to continue meeting the demand for services. A Toronto organization that participated said, “...the programs we are doing need more support...we want to get people off waitlists. We are seeing many more clients come forward that have no way of paying for counselling.”

MANY OF THE PROGRAMS OFFERED BY THESE ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE TAILORED TO EITHER SPECIFIC NEEDS OR SPECIFIC COMMUNITIES, AND WITHOUT THOSE PROGRAMS, MANY CANADIANS WOULD BE LEFT WITHOUT A PLACE TO TURN TO FOR SUPPORT. MANY RELY ON GRANT FUNDING TO SUSTAIN THEIR PROGRAMS, BUT THAT FUNDING IS NOT ALWAYS AVAILABLE OR SUSTAINABLE.

Many turn to fundraising events or soliciting donations to try to make up for some of the lack of program funding, but that is an unpredictable source of income, and with the onset of COVID-19 and other health risks, hesitancy around in-person events means that fewer people attend, and the funds raised are much lower than pre-pandemic levels. One organization said that they were able to sustain their operations, but struggle to grow and expand operations to meet the mental health services their community requires and problem-solve around meeting the wider needs that clients are presenting with. Similarly, many find it difficult to match their programs with grant opportunities, meaning that they struggle to find the funds they need to continue to offer their programs, or to develop new ones, as needed.

STAFFING AND RETENTION

Knowledge is always passed down from generation to generation. This is particularly applicable within the community mental health sphere. A great deal of what it takes to run a non-profit organization is gained through experiential efforts over many years. Today's executive leaders were yesterday's mainstream staff. A substantial number of mental health organization senior staff have made their way into their positions through years of working within the mental health and disability sector.

There is a vast amount of historical knowledge that exists within these organizations. In order for these groups to continue to be vital community healthcare resources, we need to understand the importance of having sustainability and a succession plan in place.

Many of the leaders we have spoken with have been involved with these organizations for many years. They migrated into this area of work because for many, mental health and mental illness was a part of their and their family's lives. They became involved and passionate, they grew with the organization, and they helped shape the programs and organizational structures. Most have been part of shaping the mental health service within their regions. Participating in committees and collectives that challenged the status quo and pushed for advancements and change.

We realize that the mental health non-profit sector mostly does not have similar staffing remunerations as private, government, or mainstream healthcare careers. Because of this, a great number of these organizations struggle to offer competitive salaries, to meet competing employer's recruitment opportunities

Lack of funding not only affects the programs offered, but also an organizations' ability to hire and retain staff. Many indicated that due to a lack of financial capacity, they can't offer competitive wages, pension plans, training, or benefit programs. Over 70% saying that their biggest barrier to staff retention is not being able to compete with private or public sector salaries. High levels of staff burnout due to workload and lack of volunteers were also cited as some of the reasons these organizations have a hard time retaining staff.

Given that many organizations say they lack core funding to be able to operate, it comes as no surprise that they are not able to hire enough staff to run their programs. One organization stated that there is, "...a recruitment and retention challenge for us...our counsellors are master's level social workers, but we can't pay a competitive salary currently to what the province pays... [some part-time staff] would love to come work with us but they can't afford to."



FOR MANY ORGANIZATIONS, THE STORY WAS VERY SIMILAR. ANOTHER ORGANIZATION POINTED OUT THAT STAFF AT COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS ARE ON THE FRONTLINES NOT ONLY OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, IN MANY WAYS, BUT ALSO ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE GROWING MENTAL HEALTH PANDEMIC: **“THEY’RE FRONTLINE AND THEY GOT LEFT BEHIND IN THE PANDEMIC.”**

They speak to the increased levels of staff burnout, along with the fact that many new graduates are not interested in working for smaller organizations because of the increased burnout, no pension plan, and low wages. It’s clear that other industries are facing a labour shortage, but the labour shortage facing community mental health organizations threatens to be far more dire than any other industry. Without the staff to run programs, many organizations would no longer be able to offer the supports that they do, leaving them no choice but to cancel the program(s), or cease operations completely. One participant stated that the biggest issue for their organization is “the constant turnover. We have a lot of burnout...it’s difficult to get the right people for the job, and also to kind of sustain the work as well.”

For some organizations, lack of staff means reduced capacity, and an inability to meet the sheer volume of requests from the community. One participant told us that they are often faced with having to make decisions about where best to put the limited resources they have to support young people that come to them looking for help, or for teachers/educators who are looking to run workshops for students at their schools. With skyrocketing demand, they said, “the demand for [their] programming and services is so high that [they] simply can’t meet it with the one staff member there to support youth. One organization said that often get so many referrals that they have to send people back because they lack the capacity to handle such a high volume of demand.

Most organizations said that, in addition to employing some staff, they also rely on volunteers to help run workshops or programs in the community, and are facing a shortage of volunteers as well. For most, volunteers are a crucial part of their services, with over 70% saying that they are either completely reliant or partially reliant on volunteers to support their activities. Without volunteers to boost capacity and assist staff, many organizations said they are worried about not being able to continue their programs.

Overall, many organizations survive through the passion and dedication of core staff and volunteers. However, this is not a sustainable long-term strategy for strengthening support and making real progress on meeting the demand for Canadians. It is also truly unfair and unhealthy for the workers within these organizations. It would be unthinkable for another sector of healthcare workers to be expected to work under these conditions. It should not be acceptable for our community organizations. They deserve to be recognized and acknowledged for the important part they provide to our health care.



BETTER TOGETHER

MDSC entered this project with the goal of learning more about the successful programs and services available from community mental health organizations, the challenges they face, and what collaborations they have in their local network. While some organizations said that they were trying to set up partnerships or collaborate with other organizations in their area, many were already doing so and spoke of the benefits of these collaborations.

We sought to find out what improvements they believed would help them support their communities better. We wanted to bring their experiences, knowledge, and recommendations forward together so that all these incredible organizations could be heard from across the country.

For many, their collaborations with other similar groups, or organizations like United Way, means that they can expand their work, and teach more people about their offerings. One organization said that they work with about 35 partners, and are always trying to increase this number, in order to reach more people and expand their services further. Another meets with domestic abuse agencies in the area, to share information and learn from each other, and stated that they plan on starting some training sessions with other organizations, to collaborate and learn from each other. Another participates in “situation tables”—where a group of organizations meet to discuss cases anonymously and decide as a group which service or organizations would be the best fit to assist. Through these collaborations between community organizations, Canadians get access to more services that they themselves might not have been aware of, to begin with. But when organizations are working together and sharing resources and referring each other, then an individual who seeks out one organization with a certain issue all of a sudden has access to more services and supports, thanks to the cooperation of the mental health organizations.

Several organizations stated that sometimes there are barriers put in place to collaboration. Sometimes this is because there is a perceived duplication of services. Or, there is such a shortage of funding, that community mental health organizations feel that they are in competition with each other for that small amount of funding, and, because they are all trying to access the limited government dollars available: “...instead of working together and advocating for the community... we...tear each other down because we [all] need the money.” One suggested that it might be beneficial to incentivize collaborations by providing funding streams specifically for collaborations between organizations. By encouraging more partnerships and collaborations, funding agencies and governments could not only increase the network of mental health organizations in their area but also address some of the funding issues outlined in previous sections of this report.

In many instances, organizations spoke of successful collaborations to combat things like long waitlists, to implement and expand new innovative programs, and to share resources, cross refer and make others aware of services available.



GETTING PRIMARY CARE ONBOARD

In addition to collaborating with other similar organizations, several community mental health organizations spoke of collaborations with the primary care system in their area and the benefits that emanate from this. These collaborations seemed to be, for some, at the very early stages, while others worked with local nurses and physicians' groups to educate them about the services they provide, should doctors need or want to refer patients to them. Regardless of whether they were already in some type of collaboration with primary care providers, nearly every single organization stated that better collaboration between their organization and local healthcare services would be beneficial. In many cases, doctors and family physicians are being sought out for mental health treatment, and might not be equipped to best address the situation. Without knowing what other resources exist in the community, it can be difficult for them to refer patients to service providers who are better equipped to help them with whatever issue they're dealing with.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This 10-month-long community mental health organization roundtable project has elicited key knowledge that we believe provides an accurate representation of existing operations by 48 organizations across the country. The fact that there have been so many consistent and similar experiences and viewpoints, shared from such a diverse and widespread group, illustrates some of the foundational issues that need to be addressed if we are to advance and improve mental health services in Canada.

We as a collective conclude that there needs to be policy and program funding changes to initiate proactive solutions-based improvements in the way that community mental health organizations are valued, integrated, properly and fairly compensated, and supported within our health care system.

We believe the federal government has a leadership role to play by spearheading and initiating pan-Canadian capacity-building programs that enable these organizations to apply for organizational funding streams that encourage collaborations, knowledge and resource development, and support research and program sharing that improve mental health resources for all Canadians.



Key findings:

- Community mental health organizations provide innovative, essential services in their areas, offering a range of supports and services for Canadians;
- That there is a clear and long-standing lack of foundational financial resources available to these organizations to be able to run their programs, recruit, train and maintain staff, and core operational expenses;
- That while there are a lot of challenges facing these community-based mental health organizations, there is still significant potential for them to be better supported and integrated within the Canadian mental health care system, so that all Canadians can quickly and safely seek mental health support and treatment when they need it.

Our recommendations remain consistent with the recommendations in the preliminary report, that:

- Specific funding in the proposed Canada Mental Health Transfer be allocated to community mental health organizations, to address the core funding issues that the majority of them face, and to integrate them into the mental health care system in Canada, so that all Canadians access these organizations in their area when they require supports;
- Increased opportunities for these organizations to collaborate with primary care providers, to share resources with those that might benefit from them, and to facilitate a smoother referral process, so that people in need don't fall through the cracks;
- Supporting these organizations will alleviate pressure on other sectors of our health system, like primary care and emergency wait times.

Community mental health organizations will remain a vital part of their communities, and of the local healthcare system, but without adequate funding and support from governments, their impact will be unduly limited, and they cannot operate at their full potential. Supporting these organizations will only make our healthcare system better, and benefit more Canadians.

We recognize, appreciate, and thank the forty-eight community mental health organizations that took part in these roundtables fact-finding pan-Canadian project. We also want to acknowledge the many hundreds of other community mental health organizations out there across the country, that work tirelessly daily, supporting the citizens of their communities and regions. Your dedication, commitment, professionalism, and empathy for those you serve gives us all a great sense of pride and respect.



APPENDIX A:

FULL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH ROUNDTABLE CONSULTATIONS

The organizations that participated in the pan-Canadian roundtable meetings are:

- **Health Minds Cooperate, NS:** Healthy Minds Cooperative is a peer-led and member-driven cooperative charity, committed to improving the lives of people with mental health challenges (including addiction) through peer-based supports. They focus on advocating for better access to mental health services; public education about mental illness; reducing stigma towards mental illness; peer support and advocacy for consumers and their families; more participation in the decision-making around mental health services; wellness workshops; and connecting to existing community services.
- **Relief, QC:** Offer several services to help people live with anxiety, depression or bipolarity. Whichever path people choose, their approach remains the same: self-management support. Included in their toolkit are self-management workshops which have been deployed at 38 organizations.
- **The Pottle Centre, NL:** The Pottle Centre is a drop-in social centre for adults living with mental health issues, illnesses, and addictions. The Centre provides a safe and healthy environment that promotes personal recovery and wellness. The staff encourage members to participate in enriching programs, activities and outings that foster socialization, empowerment, support and inclusion in the community.
- **Northern Initiative for Social Action, ON:** Develop occupational skills, nurture self-confidence and provide resources for recovery by creating opportunities for their participants to contribute to their own well-being and that of their community. Staff, volunteers and members are people with lived experience of mental health challenges or mental illness.
- **Lived Experience Recovery Network, ON:** Lived Experience and Recovery Network (LERN) is a networking body linking, supporting and educating all mental health consumer and family, organizations in Ontario's northeast region. They help build the capacity of local and regional organizations led by people living with mental health problems and illnesses, ensuring their voices are heard. Some of the many ways LERN provides support to member organizations include regional meetings featuring representatives from across the Northeast region of Ontario.
- **Mood Disorders Association of British Columbia, BC:** The MDABC is a non-profit organization that provides treatment, support, education, and hope of recovery for people living with a mood disorder. They serve to build awareness and understanding in communities throughout the province, reaching out to as many people as possible.

- **Prosper Place, AB:** Prosper Place is a peer-led organization serving people living with the effects of mental illness. To provide a safe, inclusive environment where peer members enhance their quality of life and develop new skills to lead productive, dignified and socially satisfying lives.
- **Mental Health Recovery Partners, BC:** Provide education and support to family and friends of those living with any serious mental illness in central Vancouver Island. Services include family support, family-to-family support, and a community education program.
- **Family Enrichment Centre, NB:** Family Enrichment is a not-for-profit community agency dedicated to providing counselling services and educational programs in Fredericton and surrounding area for people age 12 and up. They offer professional and confidential services to support the individual, family, employer, and the community. They offer individual counselling, family counselling, couple counselling, group counselling, educational workshops, and support groups.
- **Sscope, MB:** Self-Starting Creative Opportunities For People in Employment, otherwise known as SSCOPE, is a non-profit community-based casual and part-time employment service. They supply employment for people living with mental health issues. It transitioned into a shelter during the pandemic, and after moving into its current home in August 2020, it transitioned into housing for people with mental issues.
- **Crisis Centre of BC, BC:** Crisis Centre of BC offers immediate access to barrier-free, non-judgemental, confidential support and follow-up to youth, adults, and seniors throughout 24/7 phone lines and online services. Education and training programs that promote mental wellness and equip schools, organizations and communities to assist people at risk of suicide.
- **Institute for the Advancements of Mental Health, ON:** The Institute for Advancements in Mental Health (IAM), is a connector, collaborator, thought leader and solution driven organization, supporting, innovating and driving change for better mental health. IAM innovates in mental health with a focus on returning solutions back to communities, through partnership and collaboration. Through their in-house services, they design programs around the needs of their clients - people with complex mental health needs and their support circles.
- **Team Alex Suicide Prevention Society, AB:** Training coaches in minor sports in suicide prevention, mental health and bullying.
- **Distress and Crisis Ontario, ON:** An association that is the recognized leader in promotion, collaboration and building capacity within organizations that provide distress and crisis response.
- **A-Way Express, ON:** Founded as a consumer-survivor initiative in 1987, supporting Employment & Training for people with lived experiences of mental health & addiction issues.
- **GraceWins Peer Support, ON:** The core service that GraceWins offers is Mental Health and Addictions Peer Support. As Peer Supporters themselves they have lived experience of the struggle and suffering of mental health challenges, either first-hand or as caregivers to mentally ill persons. They use this experience alongside our other resources – skills, strengths, career experiences, networks – to empathetically, compassionately walk alongside our clients, enabling them to move forward in their unique Recovery journeys to realize their full potential and live full, meaningful lives.
- **Sher Vancouver, BC:** Sher Vancouver strives to provide support through education and outreach to South Asian members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- **L'Équipe Entreprise, QC:** L'Équipe Entreprise aims to provide work to individuals living with a mental health issue in a positive and supportive environment, with the goal of helping them improve their work skills and enhance their self-esteem via their main programs: Social Integration, Urban Cultivator, and Culinary Training.
- **Sashbear Foundation, ON:** Sashbear's goal is to a mental health reform by promoting awareness for the need of early prevention, recognition, timely intervention and access to affordable treatment of individuals with emotional dysregulation.
- **Sage Haven, BC:** A charitable organization that provides counselling, education, transition housing, and resources for the empowerment and safety of women, children, and youth in the Port Alberni area.

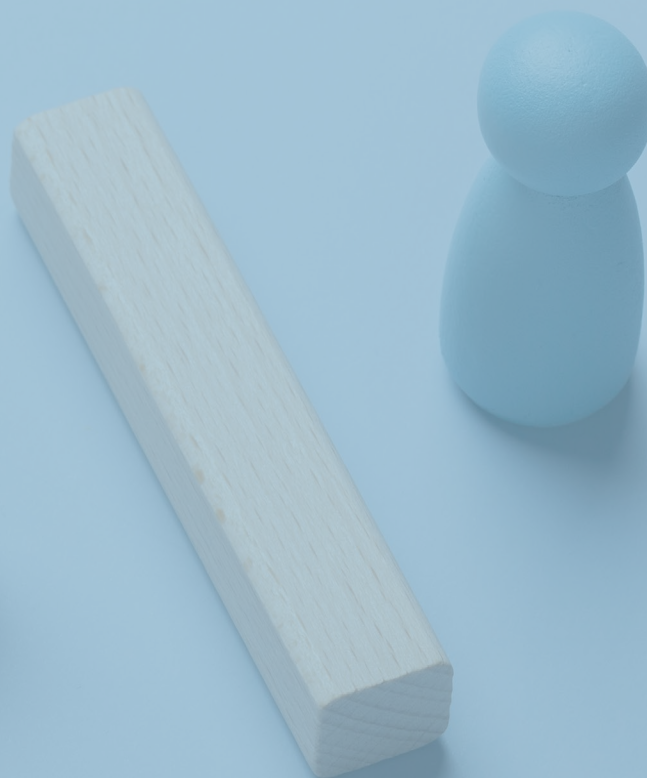
- **Good Grief Healing, ON:** Good Grief Healing's goal is to promote health for grieving adults by providing referrals to essential healing support services, including healthcare professionals, educational programming and community resources.
- **Rainbow Resource Centre, MB:** Rainbow Resource Centre nurtures inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ communities to thrive.
- **Pine River Institute, ON:** They are committed to helping adolescents struggling with addictive behaviours, frequently combined with other mental health challenges. By fostering maturity in a family-centred program, they help young people get their lives, their relationships and their futures back on track. They are dedicated to treatment excellence, research and evaluation, continuous improvement and the exchange of knowledge.
- **NFN – True Self Debwewendizwin Program, ON:** True Self Debwewendizwin Program offers Healing Centered Engagement through partnerships with community agencies, experiential learning and mentorship, promotion of multiple career pathways, innovative ideas and solutions, support skills, tools, and experiences rooted in Indigenous wholistic healing and peer support approaches providing individuals with the tools and knowledge needed to reduce their vulnerability to poverty and abuse, ultimately breaking the cycle leading to complete mental wellness and encouraging the pursuit of education, training and employment on their journey to economic autonomy.
- **Moving Forward Family Services, BC:** Empowering underserved communities through accessible counselling
- **Canadian Centre for Men and Families, ON:** An open, inclusive, safe space dedicated to the health and well-being of boys, men, fathers, and their families. We provide workshops, counselling, discussion groups and a variety of special events. Programs include trauma and abuse support, suicide prevention, fathering, tutoring, mentorship and legal aid. They run services, research, advocacy, outreach and public education on all aspects of men's issues.
- **Teamwork Cooperative, NS:** TEAM Work Cooperative works with job seekers, employers and community partners to offer employment support for all. They are an employment centre for Nova Scotians who want to explore career possibilities. They value employers as partners, and can assist with workplace needs like recruitment, retention, transition and wage subsidies. They can also help further workplace education and training.
- **Mood Disorder Association of Manitoba, MB:** The Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba is a self-help organization dedicated to providing support, education, and advocacy for those with mood disorders, co-occurring disorders, or other mental health illnesses. They increase public awareness about mood disorders and empower people to develop hope and recovery.
- **West Island Citizen Group, QC:** To promote the participation & empowerment of our peers dealing with mental health issues, topics or questions that concern them. To raise awareness & sensitize the public to the reality of people living with or have lived a mental illness. To fight the stigma of mental illness and to promote recovery and advocate for better services.
- **Vancouver Island Integrated Counselling and Community Services Society, BC:** Island Community Counselling is a non-profit agency striving to provide affordable therapeutic counselling within our communities. They work to create a safe space that fosters the growth and increased wellness of individuals, couples, and families. They offer individual, couples, family, and group therapy.
- **Crocus Cooperative, SK:** Crocus Co-op is a non-profit, charitable, member guided co-operative that works on behalf of people with a mental illness diagnosis, where members can find companionship, understanding and support.
- **Gateway Residential & Community Support Services of Niagara, ON:** Gateway Residential and Community Support Services of Niagara enables individuals to achieve greater independence through innovative consumer-centred housing and support services. Their housing and support services provide stable and supportive environments for the consumer that emphasizes personal choice, dignity and respect. They seek environments that enhance the capacity of consumers to live independently in their communities and to engage in meaningful, productive activities.

- **Stigma-Free Society, BC:** The Stigma-Free Society is committed to combating stigma of all kinds, with a focus on mental health. The Charity's Vision and Mission foster programs that cultivate, encourage, and educate diverse communities to be inclusive and compassionate through awareness and understanding through education, support and leadership. Their Society helps people achieve personal empowerment by providing peer support for youth and adults and raising awareness through education in schools and the community.
- **Canadian Centre for Men and Families (CCMF) Alberta, AB:** CCMF Alberta is a place where men are treated with compassion and without prejudice or shaming.. They encourage men and offer them tools with which to build better relationships, better lives, and better futures.
- **Rainbow Youth Centre, SK:** They engage, educate, and inspire youth and families to lead healthy lives. Rainbow Youth Centre provides comprehensive programming and activities aimed at helping young people prepare for the transition from adolescence to a healthy, productive, and independent adult lifestyle.
- **Arctic Children and Youth Foundation, NU:** They have supported youth to know where to reach out for help, learn healthy ways to cope and create safe spaces for youth to talk about the heavy issues they face as Inuit youth in Canada. They are a charity based in Iqaluit serving all of Nunavut. Their goal is to have all Nunavut children and youth obtain standards of living and services similar to the rest of Canada in terms of education, opportunities, health and well-being.
- **Borderline Personality Disorder Society of British Columbia, BC:** Provide hope, validation, and shared experience through our weekly peer-led support group. They also offer system navigation, education, and resources to the community at large. They have a speaker's bureau for medical professionals, schools, and non-profits, wanting to learn more about what BPD is and is not, and how best to support someone living with BPD.
- **Schizophrenia Society of Alberta, AB:** Schizophrenia Society of Alberta (SSA) supports individuals living with schizophrenia as well as their family and caregivers. Their goal is to provide access for our programs to all Albertans affected by schizophrenia.
- **Lifewise, NL:** Lifewise is the only provincial organization in Newfoundland & Labrador created by and for individuals living with mental health and addictions issues. They exist to support and encourage individual recovery through self-determination, while working to break the stigma surrounding these issues in society.
- **Schizophrenia Society of New Brunswick, NB:** A non-profit community-based organization derived from a family support group. Its goal is to improve the quality of life for those affected by schizophrenia and psychosis through education, support programs, public policy and research. Its membership includes families, persons diagnosed with a major mental illness, concerned citizens and organizations working for the goals of the Society.
- **Artbeat Studio, MB:** Artbeat Studio Inc. runs unique community-based, self-directed, peer-supported programming. It provides social supports, working art studio and gallery space, and mentorship for individuals living with mental illness for the purpose of recovery and empowerment. Artbeat Studio Inc. is a not-for-profit registered charity. We are committed to decreasing stigma and discrimination that coincides with mental illness and poverty through positive action, mental health education and advocacy.
- **Northern Mosaic, NWT:** As an organization, the Northern Mosaic Network strives to make communities in the Northwest Territories a safer, more open, more knowledgeable place for all 2SLGBTQIPA+ people and their allies. They have worked with national 2SLGBTQIPA+ organizations as NWT representatives, offered peer-mentorship to youth all over the NWT, organized multiple events, supported Gender & Sexuality Alliance clubs in schools, traveled to communities to support Prides, developed educational workshops and resources and opened a Rainbow Youth Centre with free programming each week for 2SLGBTQIPA+ people and their allies to utilize.
- **Turning Leaf, MB:** Turning Leaf is a non-profit, charitable organization designed to provide crisis intervention, treatment and support services to people living with mental illness and intellectual challenge. The participants of Turning Leaf's programs are often deeply impacted by their circumstances which become barriers to living safely and independently in the community. These barriers can include homelessness, addictions, discrimination, sexual exploitation, societal stigmas, lack of access to meaningful employment and/or resources, and behaviour that brings them into conflict with the law.

- **Laing House, NS:** Laing House is a non-profit that is dedicated to empowering young people living with mental illness by providing well-rounded support in young people's wellness plans, which leads to better outcomes. They offer quality, non-clinical, people-centered mental health support for youth ages 16 - 29.
- **Family Service PEI, PEI:** Family Service PEI is a not-for-profit charitable organization, committed to offering services to all Islanders regardless of their ability to pay. They offer high quality evidence based therapeutic counselling to individuals, couples, families and groups.
- **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yukon, YT:** They enable life-changing mentoring relationships to ignite the power and potential of young people.



Mood Disorders Society of Canada
Société pour **les troubles de l'humeur** du Canada



MOOD DISORDERS SOCIETY OF CANADA

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