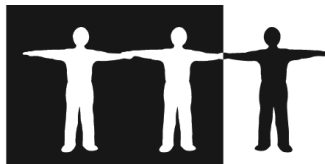


**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the  
2025 Budget**

**By: Mood Disorders Society of Canada**

July 28, 2025



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

## Summary of Recommendations

1. **Recommendation 1:** That the Government of Canada invest in targeted support for community-focused mental health organizations by allocating funding for solutions-based programs and services to address the serious issue of mental illness and substance use disorders.
2. **Recommendation 2:** That the Government of Canada invest \$5 million over the next five years to support capacity building of community mental health organizations by providing funding to the Canadian Community Mental Health Network (CCMHN).

## Introduction

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) **is committed to advocating for better support for community mental health organizations to build a more resilient and equitable mental health system for all Canadians.** We firmly believe that supporting community mental health is an investment in economic stability. By recognizing and supporting the important role of community mental health organizations in delivering care to Canadians, **we can help build a stronger Canada that benefits from all they have to offer.**

The federal government can help alleviate burdens on the Canadian health system by recognizing the critical role of community mental health organizations in providing mental health care services and support to millions of Canadians.

## How Community Mental Health Care Organizations Help

When someone walks into their local community mental health organization seeking support, they are welcomed with low to no-cost services and resources, along with flexible scheduling and telehealth options that meet their lifestyle. Community-based mental health services offer support, prevention, and treatment for individuals facing mental health challenges. Unlike institutional settings, these services are integrated within local communities, and understand that mental health intersects with unique social, economic and cultural factors.

Services provided by community mental health organizations include:

- Mental health care and support;
- Psychological services;
- Education and mental health training;
- Distress and crisis response teams;
- Peer supports and services;
- Housing supports;
- Workplace mental health training and support.

**These services are vital in alleviating the strain on our health care systems.** By helping individuals avoid crises, they significantly reduce emergency department visits and ease the burden on acute care services. They also act as a critical layer of crisis management, offering timely support that can stabilize situations before they escalate to hospital-level care. By providing earlier access to publicly funded services, these programs can prevent the need for costly and time-consuming interventions. With wait times to see psychiatrists and psychologists that can be upwards of a year, these organizations fill the gaps in care and help get Canadians the support they need, when they need it.

**Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada invest in targeted support for community-focused mental health organizations by allocating funding for solutions-based programs and services to address the serious issue of mental illness and substance use disorders.**

**Investing in mental health is a sound social and economic policy that benefits all Canadians and all governments.** Accessible and affordable mental health care provides stability that benefits individuals while bolstering entire communities, contributing to a stronger and healthier nation, and reducing pressures on social safety nets.

**The federal role in building and supporting capacity** through a pan-Canadian approach could leverage an open call for proposals process through either Employment and Social Development Canada, Opportunities Fund, or Health Canada's existing program streams, which would invite multiple organizations in a fair and equitable opportunity for multi-region group collaborative project submissions.

**Community mental health groups are critically underfunded**, leaving them unable to meet the growing demand for services, particularly for conditions like anxiety and depression. These organizations are also siloed and need to have a connecting network of similar groups throughout our country. Over one-third of Canadians report unmet mental health needs, often due to funding and accessibility barriers. By better supporting and connecting these organizations, we can ensure all Canadians have timely and equitable access to essential mental health care.

Problems related to mental illness have far-reaching economic and societal consequences, **imposing an economic burden estimated at over \$51 billion annually in Canada**, which encompasses health care costs and significant losses in productivity (Government of Canada, 2024). As a leading cause of disability in Canada, poor mental health leads to greater absenteeism in the workplace and reduced productivity. Working adults, comprising 65% of the Canadian labour force, dedicate most of their lives to their occupations (Statistics Canada, 2025). Workplace stress significantly impacts the mental health of a large segment of the Canadian workforce, with approximately 70% of working Canadians reporting that their job affects their mental well-being. This issue also influences individuals entering the workforce, hindering their ability to secure and retain employment and impeding their long-term career development.

Providing timely and accessible mental health support can significantly benefit individuals by increasing their likelihood of remaining employed, reducing sick leave and preventing mental health issues from escalating into more severe illnesses. Mental health organizations play a crucial role in offering essential support and resources that empower Canadians to manage mental health challenges, thereby fostering greater participation and development within the workforce.

Federal spending must be designed to make a measurable difference in the lives of Canadians through local solutions. This includes:

- Reallocating federal funding, from other resources such as the Public Health Agency of Canada, to better support the capacity of mental health organizations nationally.
- Mental health care urgently requires transformation with technological advances that support access to timely, accurate, and effective mental health care. Using innovative system tools to improve diagnosis and treatment pathways, such as those from Rapids Health, can benefit the mental health community as a whole. The RAPIDS tool is a Decision Support System that facilitates early diagnosis and provides effective treatment planning for mental health disorders.
- Increased opportunities for collaboration between organizations on a pan-Canadian level.

Canada faces a growing crisis in mental illness and substance use, with an increasing number of individuals struggling to access adequate support. Our health care system, already under immense strain, is struggling to meet the current demand, leading to significant bottlenecks at service entry points. This has forced many Canadians to seek alternative avenues for care. As a result, community mental health organizations have seen a flood of new patients or clients utilizing their services. These community-based organizations are stepping in to deliver resources, programs, services and coping tools to those seeking mental health support. A designated, flexible segment of government funding for mental health organizations to access is essential to support their vital role in mental health care and strengthen their capacity.

**What Canadians think:**

- 76% of Canadians ranked access to community health services and supports as important or critically important. (MDSC, 2022)
- 60% DO NOT believe that governments have made access to mental health care services in the community a priority since the beginning of the pandemic. (MDSC 2022 Survey)

**Recommendation 2: That the federal government invest \$5 million over the next five years to support capacity building of community mental health organizations by providing funding to the Canadian Community Mental Health Network (CCMHN), which is a pan-Canadian network of community mental health organizations.**

The Canadian Community Mental Health Network (CCMHN) is a pan-Canadian collaboration of regional community mental health organizations dedicated to delivering high-quality and impactful mental health services. Members are Community Mental Health Organizations not currently affiliated with a national organization or entity, who have grown from the grassroots

with an emphasis on serving their region while leveraging the leadership, knowledge, and its leadership includes People with Lived/Living Experience.

The CCMHN aims to empower mental health organizations to collaborate with health service providers, bridge care gaps, support early and proactive mental health treatment, and assist Canadians awaiting additional services. It also strengthens the capacity of individual member organizations and the broader mental health sector by promoting the sharing of programs, resources, and knowledge to drive system-wide improvements. These goals are achieved through the following activities:

1. **Facilitating a more unified and pan-Canadian approach** by bringing together many regional organizations under one collaborating umbrella network.
2. **Strengthening and building strong community working collaborations** between mental health organizations and health care clinicians.
3. **Supporting capacity building** in areas such as governance, operations, staff recruitment, retention, and training. This includes fostering research partnerships, offering research training for people with lived experience, and enhancing volunteer recruitment, training, and support. CCMHC also leverages and implements artificial intelligence tools and programs to increase capacity and resources for mental illness interventions and supports.
4. **Advancing research to enable evidence-based decision-making**, enhance service delivery, and bolster advocacy efforts to secure funding from a variety of sources, including public, private, and philanthropic sectors.
5. **Knowledge and educational exchange** (including the establishment of a CCMHN Knowledge Hub, best practices sharing and evidence development, cross-training, research advancement and promotion, and hosting CCMHN conferences)
6. **Sustainability**, succession planning and funding security.

Strengthening members' ability to serve clients is achieved through capacity-building and the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and programs. CCMHN unifies stand-alone community-based organizations, fostering collaboration to address resource gaps and enhance mental health support across Canada. Despite facing funding limitations, staffing shortages, and limited access to vital resources such as medication, therapy spaces, and community support programs, community organizations remain steadfast in their dedication to serving their communities. **Funding for the CCMHN will enable the Network to achieve its goals more effectively. This will directly address system challenges, alleviate pressure on the strained mental healthcare system, and guarantee comprehensive, accessible, and culturally sensitive support for those in need.**

## About MDSC

MDSC is a national non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of Canadians affected by mood disorders like depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. Established in 2001, MDSC works to promote mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and advocate for better policies and care. By integrating lived experiences into its approach, the organization fosters an inclusive and supportive environment for mental health nationwide.

MDSC views **community mental health organizations as a foundational component of Canada's health care resources**. We thrive on collaboration, actively partnering with organizations across public, private, and voluntary sectors. Through diverse initiatives, MDSC promotes the inclusion and equity of individuals with mental illnesses in Canadian society. Taking a proactive role, we lead national efforts in shaping public policy and program development to create a more inclusive and supportive mental health landscape.

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