

Discussion: Investing in Mental Health and Addiction Services

According to Health Canada, 1 in 5 people will have a serious mental illness or experience substance abuse issues within their lifetime¹ and at least 60 per cent of individuals diagnosed with a mental illness also have addictions. The MOHLTC's report "Every Door is the Right Door" found that \$39 Billion was spent each year by Ontario alone to deal with these disabilities.² Despite the high cost of mental health and addictions, the situation is getting worse. Investment in a client-centred long-term strategy is the only cost-effective solution. We know that every dollar spent on mental health and addictions saves \$7 in health costs and \$30 in lost productivity and social costs.³ With a comprehensive 10-year strategy and conclusive ministry-led reports in hand all that is required is the political will to invest and achieve the results we so desperately need.

An essential starting point is an integrated and seamless mental health-care system for all Ontarians, with interprofessional collaboration, delivered at the individual's preferred location, with special consideration for: members of Aboriginal communities, older adults tackling both new and ongoing mental health and addictions challenges, people from racialized communities, new Canadians, people with disabilities, discharged members of the Canadian Forces, children and youth requiring increased and enhanced mental health and addictions services, inmates in correctional facilities, and rehabilitated ex-convicts. A number of First Nations communities have declared a state of emergency due to prescription narcotics, particularly oxycodone-containing drugs.⁴ Addiction rates in some of the First Nations communities in Kenora-Rainy River are 30 or 40 per cent⁵ with some as high as 70 per cent.⁶

Without disclosing any identifying information, we would like to share with you a few illustrations from our practice that demonstrate the need for greater investment in mental health and addictions.

QUESTION: We've seen many reports and studies and it's time for action. Will your party support urgent investments in mental health and addiction services?

References

¹ Health Canada, *A Report on Mental Illnesses in Canada* (Ottawa: Health Canada, 2002),

² Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2009). *Every Door is the Right Door*. Retrieved January 28, 2011 at http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/mentalhealth/minister_advisgroup/pdf/discussion_paper.pdf

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (2010). *Rising use and abuse of narcotics*. August 27, 2010. <http://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2010/08/rising-use-and-abuse-of-narcotics.html>

⁵ Hampton, H. (2010, Sept. 15). First Reading, Narcotic Safety and Awareness Act, 2010. *Official Report of Debates (Hansard)*. Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Second Session, 39th Parliament, 2115. <http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

⁶ Gélinas, F. (2010, Sept. 27). Second Reading, Narcotic Safety and Awareness Act, 2010. *Official Report of Debates (Hansard)*. Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Second Session, 39th Parliament, 2312. http://www.ontla.on.ca/house-proceedings/transcripts/files_pdf/27-SEP-2010_L047.pdf