



Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation

May 12th, 2006
The Honourable Michael J.L. Kirby
The Senate of Canada
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa K1A 0A4

Re: Final Report of The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, “Out of the Shadows at Last — Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada”

Dear Senator Kirby,

The Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation (CPRF) is thrilled about the completion and release of your report, *Out of the Shadows at Last: Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Services in Canada*. We commend you and the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology on your commitment to mental health-care reform and your willingness to collaborate with the CPRF and other stakeholders. Your leadership throughout this first-ever national mental health study was exemplary.

As you and the Committee duly noted, mental illness commands less than five per cent of Canada’s health research funding, yet affects more than 20 per cent of the population and costs our health system as much as \$7 billion annually — second only to cardiovascular disease. Your highly anticipated report, though, provides an impetus for increased investment in mental health research — up to 1 per cent of total health-care spending by the federal government. An annual \$25 million commitment towards fieldwork would certainly be a move in the right direction. Such funding would not only strengthen and build upon psychiatric research, but also support the valuable exchange of knowledge among service delivery, health promotion and research stakeholders.

The CPRF especially applauds your recognition of stigma associated with mental illness and addiction, as creating significant barriers to attracting appropriate publicity, getting corporate sponsorship and raising money for research. As a result of minimal understanding, CPRF faces a significant challenge raising awareness and funds to expand knowledge of brain functions, develop new drugs and improve therapeutic management of mental disorders.

Additionally, the Committee listened to our call for a central, Internet database. The creation of the Knowledge Exchange Centre would facilitate researchers, as they negotiate their way through government granting agencies and both private and the non-profit sector funding sources. It would invariably assist in the exchange of mental health research, including the ethical, respectful study of human participants.

Moreover, your report acknowledges the need for a mental health system that is community-based and recovery-oriented. The suggested Canadian Mental Health Commission (CMHC), in our view, would provide leadership in the development of this national strategy. The CMHC would focus attention on a “long-neglected area” and “end the long-standing fragmentation of services.” It would construct a first-class mental health system from coast-to-coast, comparable to other developed countries’.

We are very pleased with these and other recommendations. It is quite evident in your report that you carefully considered the testimony of our and other organizations, as well as the more than two thousand personal stories submitted to you. We are confident your work will encourage the federal and provincial governments to respond to the needs of those affected by mental maladies.

The CPRF remains committed to raising and distributing funds for psychiatric research and awareness in Canada. In addition to producing the best-selling *When Something's Wrong* series of handbooks, we are excited to launch the commemorative book, *Psyche in the Lab: Celebrating Brain Science in Canada*. As well, the CPRF is eager and ready to partner with the Committee in the implementation of your all-important proposals. So please do not hesitate to contact us if you require our assistance in the future.

Congratulations again on your groundbreaking report.

Best Regards,

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Cc The Honourable Wilbert Joseph Keon; Members of the Committee; The Honourable Tony Clements; Mr. Mitch Bloom; Dr. Martha Donnelly; CCSMH Steering Committee Members; Ms. Simone Powell; Ms. Barbara Beckett; Dr. Rémi Quirion; Dr. Anne Martin-Matthews; CAMIMH Members; Mr. Geoff Quirt; CCSMH Members

