



## Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division

2020 Budget Consultation presentation to the Select  
Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

June 20, 2019



## Canadian Mental Health Association

- CMHA is one of the most established national charitable organizations in Canada. We've been in BC since 1952.
- Our vision: "Mentally healthy people in a healthy society."
- CMHA operates in BC through the BC division, which provides province-wide programs and policy leadership, and 14 branches serving over 100 communities to meet local needs.



## BC Context: Historic Underfunding

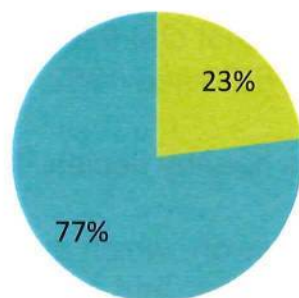
- BC has one of the highest provincial rates of repeat hospitalizations and readmission within 30 days due to mental illness in Canada.
- Rates of involuntary treatment under the *Mental Health Act* increased by 54% between 2008/09 and 2015/16.



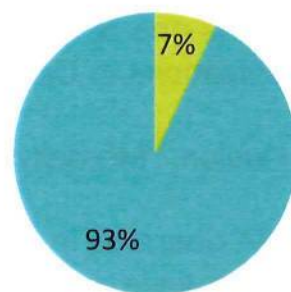
### Disease Burden

vs.

### Spending



■ Mental Health  
■ Other





## Recommendation #1

Increase funding for mental health and substance use services to 9% of total healthcare spending and ring fence those funds to ensure they are dedicated to mental health and substance use services with common performance standards.



## Recommendation #2

Increase funding for upstream, community-based services that promote mental wellness before people experience illness or crisis.



Thank you



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
British Columbia  
*Mental health for all*

June 20, 2019

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
Room 224, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4

### **Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division's Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services: Budget 2020 Consultation**

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The Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division (CMHA BC) urges the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the Finance Committee) to prioritize investments that illustrate that BC values mental health as much as it values physical health.

CMHA is the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health. We facilitate access to the resources people require to maintain and improve mental health; build resilience; and support recovery from mental illness and problematic substance use. We work to support the mental health of people of all ages and we strive to influence both the health system and systems that impact social determinants of health. In BC, CMHA is made up of a provincial office (CMHA BC) and 14 branches providing community-based services in over 100 communities throughout the province.

#### **CONTEXT**

CMHA BC regularly hears from individuals and families that BC's mental health and addictions system lacks coordination and capacity to support people when they need it. People with mental health and substance use-related illnesses (and the people close to them) report searching for services and support, but run into a fragmented system that is difficult to navigate and that presents lengthy waitlists for or an absence of publicly-funded services. As a result, if individuals cannot pay for private care, they are often unable to access effective health and social supports early on in their illness. Instead, their health may decline into a crisis that is serious enough to allow them to access care through the hospital or criminal justice systems, both of which often involve police.

These facts are confirmed by the statistical reality in BC:

- BC's hospitalization rates and length of hospitalizations for mental illness are higher than the national average.<sup>1</sup>
- BC has one of the highest provincial rates of repeat hospitalizations and readmission within 30 days due to mental illness in Canada.<sup>2</sup>
- Rates of involuntary treatment under the *Mental Health Act* increased by 54% between 2008/09 and 2015/16.<sup>3</sup>
- A recent BC Coroners Service Death Panel Review Report identified that police services are now a crucial component of BC's mental health system.<sup>4</sup>

Mental health issues account for 23% of disease burden,<sup>5</sup> but based on health authority financial statements, BC spends approximately 6.94% of its healthcare spending on mental health and substance use services, with variation among different regions in BC.<sup>6</sup> BC's spending is below the target of 9% set by the Mental Health Commission of Canada<sup>7</sup> and well below spending in other jurisdictions like the UK and New Zealand, which spend in the range of 11 to 13%.<sup>8</sup>



## DISCUSSION

The above context reflects a historic disparity between how we value mental health. A lack of adequate spending on mental health and substance services in BC has resulted in a situation that we would not accept for physical illness: people are unable to find or access the services they need when they experience mental health or substance use-related symptoms. This comes at an incredible cost to individuals, families, communities and our provincial systems. Individuals may lose the ability to have a say in their health care, families may be forced to standby as a loved one is unwell, and communities and our systems pay the costs of addressing mental health and substance use health issues through expensive emergency care and police services.

There is a clear need in BC to increase investment in mental health and substance use-related health services to ensure everyone has access to a coordinated and integrated system when they need it. But the solutions to growing costs of mental illness will not be found in increased health services alone. There is also a need to move upstream from urgent, crisis-based responses and focus on what we can do to keep people well in the first place.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the above context and discussion, CMHA BC makes two main recommendations for BC Budget 2020:

- (1) Increase funding for mental health and substance use services to 9% of total healthcare spending and ring fence/earmark those funds to ensure they are dedicated to mental health and substance use services with common performance standards.
- (2) Increase upstream, community-based services that promote mental wellness before people experience illness or crisis. Services that promote mental wellness in community include housing, income, employment supports and services that foster social inclusion. In addition, CMHA BC believes that mental health begins where we live, work and play and sees three key opportunities to increase spending on community-based mental health promotion services in BC:
  - a. Ensure that mental health and substance use services, including community-based mental health promotion services, are integrated into BC's primary care strategy.
  - b. Promote the mental wellness of adults in their communities using educational approaches like the recovery college model, which supports user-designed learning about mental health and wellness.
  - c. Promote the mental wellness of children and youth in their schools by supporting community-based organizations to deliver mental health promotion curricula.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Indicators Interactive Tool (2016 data).

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Indicators Interactive Tool (2017 data).

<sup>3</sup> BC Ministry of Health, FOI Response Package HLTH-2017-72558 at page 3 (available in the Open Information Catalogue).

<sup>4</sup> BC Coroners Service, *Opportunities for Different Outcomes – Police: a crucial component of BC's mental health system* (4 June 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Mental Health Commission of Canada, *Strengthening the Case for Investing in Canada's Mental Health System: Economic Considerations* (2017) at 20.

<sup>6</sup> Vancouver Coastal Health: 8.82%; Fraser Health: 7.19%; Vancouver Island Health: 7.29%; Interior Health: 6.33%; Northern Health: 5.24%; PHSA: 5.10% (all taken from 2017/18 Financial Statements).

<sup>7</sup> Mental Health Commission of Canada, *Changing directions, changing lives: The mental health strategy for Canada* (2012).

<sup>8</sup> See note 7; also see CMHA National, *Ending the Health Care Disparity: Mental Health in Balance* (September 2018).