

Attention News Editors:

Where do political parties stand on mental health and addictions?

TORONTO, Oct. 5 /CNW/ - Ontario voters now have the opportunity to review each party's commitments on mental health and addictions issues before casting their ballot next week. The results of party questionnaires were released today by a partnership of organizations representing mental health and addictions consumers and service providers. The results from parties and individual candidates are available on-line at www.ofcmhap.on.ca/node/343 (Election 2007 tab).

The Ontario Election next week is the first time that each of the parties have recognized the need to address the complex health and social issues facing people with addiction and mental health issues. Whatever the outcome of next week's election, Ontario's mental health and addictions stakeholders are committed to building opportunities to improve the lives of Ontarians with mental health and addictions problems, their families and communities.

Mental health and addiction organizations are concerned that the commitments of the parties to improve disability support payments and develop more supportive housing fail to match community need. "Without adequate income, housing and appropriate employment, recovery is incomplete," said Deborah Sherman, President of the Ontario Peer Development Initiative representing mental health consumer survivor organizations. "I encourage everyone - but particularly those with mental health and addictions problems - to review the parties' positions on these issues before casting their ballots."

David Kelly, executive director of the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addictions Programs urges all voters to carefully consider the approaches of each party and look to the solutions that support recovery in a holistic fashion. There are clear distinctions in the Party platforms and approaches to addiction and mental health issues. With one in five Ontarians needing these vital supports in their lifetime it is important to have leadership and commitment to addiction and mental health issues.

"Let's start with the good news," said Lorne Zon, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario. "Each major political party has made important commitments about investing in mental health services. Our biggest challenges remain improving access to services, and strengthening the housing and income supports provided to those with mental health and addiction problems."



This partnership was developed in 2004, and is comprised of six organizations that include: Addictions Ontario, Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Ontario Association of Patient Councils (OAPC), Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs (OFCMHAP) and Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI). Together, they are committed to raising the profile of mental illness and addictions in Ontario, and to supporting the needs of those living with mental health and addictions problems, their families, and their communities.

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