

NEWS RELEASE

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CMHA APPLAUDS BC SIGNING ON TO HEALTH ACCORD AS IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS #B4STAGE4 SYSTEM FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS CARE IN BC

Let's ensure the \$655 million 10-year investment puts mental health and addictions care on a more equal footing with physical health care

Vancouver (February 17, 2017) – Today's historic signing of a new 10-year, \$1.4 billion health-funding agreement, with \$655 million earmarked for mental health, recognizes the importance of valuing mental health and addictions care more equally with physical health care. The agreement also identifies separate resources of \$10 million from the federal government to help BC's response to the opioid overdose crisis.

"This level of investment from the federal government, in partnership with our province, helps to course correct long-standing federal underinvestment in the mental health of Canadians," says CMHA BC CEO Bev Gutray. "We hope this infusion of resources will empower the BC Government to set spending priorities so that we can help British Columbians *before* they are in a Stage 4 mental health or addictions crisis. We applaud Minister Terry Lake's leadership in signing onto this important agreement."

In October 2016, CMHA BC released its b4stage4 manifesto calling for investments in five main areas, designed to improve mental health and addiction care in BC. The new health accord agreement is an opportunity for action in the following areas:

1. *Lets' focus investments in the prevention of mental health and addiction problems and early intervention when symptoms first arise* – people should be able to "ask once – and get help fast."
2. *Let's build an accessible, publicly funded addictions treatment system* – just like Minister Lake said during this morning's press conference – people who want addictions help should be able to access it when needed
3. *Let's strengthen recovery closer to home in community* – we know people are more likely to get better in community, at home. Ensuring access to housing, employment supports, and peer support are all key ingredients.
4. *Let's improve crisis care* – we are at Stage 4 when it comes to opioid overdoses and we lose over 500 people in BC to suicide each year. We can do better at helping people get the help they need when in crisis
5. *Let's lead change in mental health and addictions* – this agreement is an opportunity for bold leadership and vision. We are ready to help government with a plan to build a b4stage4 system of care for people living with mental health and addictions problems

To learn more about CMHA BC's b4stage4 campaign, please visit www.b4stage4.ca.

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About the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

CMHA is Canada's most established mental health charity and the nation-wide leader and champion for mental

health. CMHA helps people access the resources they need to maintain and improve mental health, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness. Each year in BC alone, CMHA serves more than 100,000 people all across the province. For mental health and addiction information and resources visit www.cmha.ca.

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