

Ontario Health Coalition

15 Gervais Dr. Suite 305, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1Y8 tel: 416-441-2502
fax 416-441-4073 email: ohc@sympatico.ca www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 13, 2005.

Politicians, media invited to “Walk a Mile in My Shoes”

NORTH BAY - The North Bay Health Coalition invites municipal, provincial and federal candidates as well as the media to spend some time walking in the shoes of consumer/survivors and front line workers in the mental health care field.

The coalition issued the invitation as it released its report on the state of mental health care in North Bay entitled “If we had to walk in each other’s shoes”. The report, prepared after a round table meeting of front line workers, consumer/survivors and agency representatives earlier this fall, identifies the need for policy makers and the community to be educated on what is happening in the mental health care field.

The report also identifies suggestions for improvement to mental health care from the round table participants:

1. Money earmarked for Mental Health should go to Mental Health.
There is a growing concern that with the divestment of Psychiatric Hospitals to General Hospitals in a community, and hospitals already stretched for dollars, the psychiatric hospital will suffer with bed closures and staffing cuts.
2. An information center or service that can direct those with mental illness to the service they require. Note: This is not a proposal for privatization, nor for one organization running the entire mental health services in a community. PEP representatives are adamant that consumer/survivor organizations need to be included in the list.
3. Provincial rates for shelter and transportation are inadequate to meet basic needs.
Provincial legislation creates a disincentive to work, even if a consumer/survivor can find a job, because access to medication and income supports is lost.
4. More safe and affordable housing and crisis beds need to be made available in North Bay.
5. Much remains to be done to deal with stigma and discrimination that create higher rates of unemployment and poverty among consumer/survivors of mental illness.

A copy of the report is attached.