

**Report from Building Links for Better Mental Health
OPSEU and OHC - November 3 and 4, 2004**

Key Issues

Determinants of Health:

Access to safe and affordable housing – increase availability of housing (crisis beds, safe houses, regulated group homes)

Access to jobs, education/training, affordable activities and meaningful lives

Access to adequate income - improved and more flexible ODSP and Ontario Works; increased minimum wage; affordable transportation

Access to services:

Access to a continuum of integrated, culturally specific and appropriate services, adequately funded, and available where and when they are needed

Access to survivor, family and community supports

Access to advocacy services

Access to a range of other health services

Increase funding to community agencies and services; increase funding to inpatient services; stop downsizing

Strengthen the public system:

Promote options that retain public control and delivery; no P3s

Protect mental health dollars (stop diversion of mental health dollars; protect children's mental health funding and addictions programs)

Accountability and Transparency:

Government and hospitals must be accountable through transparent disclosure and audits to ensure that money earmarked for mental health services is properly allocated

Stigma:

Have a voice that is heard where it counts

Remove stigma by raising the profile of mental health and addictions issues

Forensic Services:

Jails and the criminal justice system are not the place for people with mental illness

Forensic beds must be available for all people with mental illness who require assessment to determine whether they should be in the justice system

Psychogeriatric Services:

Attention should be paid to the many individuals requiring specialized psychogeriatric services that are now being placed in long term care facilities where staffing levels and training may not be adequate to deal with their needs

Next steps:

1. The Ontario Health Coalition should continue to build the mental health subcommittee of coalition.
2. The OHC/Local Coalitions should organize community roundtables on mental health issues that would include front line workers, survivors, family members, advocacy organizations, community agencies; government and justice/corrections. This would hopefully lead to the creation of a mental health committee in each local coalition.
3. The OHC to issue a report on these roundtables. Local coalitions would be encouraged to share the results of the roundtables with their MPPs and municipal politicians.
4. The OHC/local coalitions plan for a spring action to raise the profile of mental health issues in communities across the province. Each local coalition should find a way to visually depict the issues. One idea would be community walks down the main street of towns and cities (“If you think mental health is adequately funded, take a walk down main street”; “walk a mile in my shoes”)
5. The OHC should support and publicize the work of other organizations involved in mental health issues, for example the ODSP Action Coalition.
6. The OHC should request an audit of all divested provincial psychiatric hospitals to determine whether mental health dollars are being protected.