



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Ontario



## NEWS RELEASE

### **New election campaign urges voters to “choose” mental health and addictions care**

(Toronto, Monday, April 25, 2022) – The province is less than 40 days away from electing its next government and a new campaign from Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario is encouraging voters to put one topic at the top of their election wish list: mental health and addictions care.

CMHA Ontario’s “*I choose*” campaign will use the next six weeks to spotlight different challenges that are having an impact on how people access care in this province.

To kickstart the campaign, CMHA Ontario is urging voters to think about how their care may be affected by an overburdened and burned-out frontline mental health and addictions workforce.

“Like nurses, personal support workers and long-term care staff, employees at CMHAs and other community mental health and addictions agencies have been hit hard by the pandemic,” said Camille Quenneville, CEO, CMHA Ontario. “The situation is dire as our workers are exhausted and emotionally fatigued.”

Community-based workers are now leaving for other health-related jobs that are better resourced and provide higher pay.

“Aside from providing high quality care, staff recruitment and retention is now the most significant issue,” Quenneville said. “We need a dedicated workforce to ensure that all Ontarians are receiving the mental health and addictions supports that they deserve.”

CMHA Ontario points to years or chronic underfunding as the main contributor to key issues like staff retention, growing wait lists and severe shortage of supportive housing.

Since 2016 the government has provided \$132 billion for the acute care sector versus \$7 billion for community mental health and addictions.

What funding the community sector receives is always time-limited and specific to delivery of a program or service, meaning agencies have little flexibility in how to use the investment.

CMHA Ontario calls for a substantial, immediate and ongoing *base* funding increase for the community mental health and addictions sector.

Unlike program-specific investment, *base* funding allows community service providers the flexibility to cover rising operational costs such as inflation, salaries and other overhead.

“Community providers often have to choose between maintaining services for clients or keeping the lights on and paying staff a fair wage,” Quenneville said. “This does a tremendous disservice to the Ontarians we are committed to helping every day.”

Here are examples of what is happening at some CMHA branches because of a lack of provincial base funding:

- 66 per cent of resignations over the last two years have been salary-based
- Positions go unfilled because there's not enough funding; candidates are offered jobs but refuse due to low salary
- Roles change from provincially regulated professions (i.e. social workers, nurses, occupational therapists) to unregulated roles which come at a lower salary
- CMHA registered nurses make 33 per cent less than registered nurses at other health care providers

CMHA Ontario urges the public to vote for the party that will invest significantly in the community mental health and addictions system.

For more information about the “I choose” campaign, visit [www.ichoosemha.ca](http://www.ichoosemha.ca) or follow #ichoosemha on social media.

For a broader look at the challenges impacting mental health and addictions services in Ontario, visit [www.everythingisnotok.ca](http://www.everythingisnotok.ca)

Fast Facts:

- A survey last December conducted by Mental Health Research Canada found that 66 per cent of nurses reported burnout; mental health professionals followed closely at 61 per cent
- CMHA Ontario polling has found that nearly 80 per cent of Ontarians expect the province to be in a mental health crisis once the pandemic is over
- One CMHA branch has seen an 86 per cent nurse turnover, with many leaving after less than a year.

***About Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario***

*Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario is a not-for-profit, charitable organization funded by the provincial government. We work to improve the lives of all Ontarians through leadership, collaboration and continual pursuit of excellence in community-based mental health and addictions services. Our vision is a society that embraces and invests in the mental health of all people. We are a trusted advisor to government, contributing to health systems development through policy formulation and recommendations that promote positive mental health.*

-30-

For more information, contact:

Mike Feenstra  
Communications, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario  
T: 416-203-0427  
E: [mfeenstra@ontario.cmha.ca](mailto:mfeenstra@ontario.cmha.ca)