



## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:

### **Bell Let's Talk Day A Reminder about Ontario's Lack of Mental Health and Addictions Services**

**(Sarnia, Monday, Jan. 29, 2018)** – This year, people in Lambton Kent have an opportunity to push for lasting change on Bell Let's Talk Day.

Sign the petition at [www.erasethedifference.ca](http://www.erasethedifference.ca) and send a strong message to provincial election candidates that ***mental health and addictions care in Ontario should be funded the same as physical health care.*** The petition is led by Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Ontario in collaboration with CMHA Lambton Kent in the lead up to the June provincial election.

“Awareness campaigns such as Bell Let's Talk Day are welcome and extremely valuable as they help break the stigma and reduce the discrimination associated with mental health and addictions,” said Alan Stevenson, CEO of CMHA Lambton Kent. “But the fact remains that mental health and addictions services in Ontario remain chronically underfunded compared to other parts of the health system,” Alan Stevenson said. “Without regular and ongoing investment into the system, people coming forward to seek help can end up languishing while they wait for service.”

The burden of mental illness in Ontario is 1.5 times that of all cancers combined and more than seven times of all infectious diseases.<sup>i</sup> Meanwhile, Ontario devotes \$3.5 billion of a total \$54-billion health budget to mental health and addictions.<sup>ii,iii</sup> The mental health and addictions share of the health budget is 6.5 per cent. In 1979, it was 11.3 per cent.<sup>iv</sup>

There are 30 CMHA branches throughout the province. Together with other local agencies, CMHAs belong to a community-based mental health and addictions sector that serves half a million Ontarians, but many community-based agencies like ours have received little to no budget increases. Without ongoing investment, we often face challenges maintaining or enhancing vital services such as case management, counselling and supportive housing. “Couple budget restraints with rising operational expenditures and we also have challenges with staff recruitment and retention,” Alan Stevenson said. “What we're finding is that we are losing dedicated, compassionate and caring individuals to other opportunities that give them more financial security. In the end, it's a detriment to our clients.”

#### **Fast Facts:**

- Currently, the average wait time to see a counsellor across Ontario is five months.
- One in five Ontarians experience a mental health problem or illness in any given year.
- 500,000 Canadians will miss work due to mental health issues in any given week

**About Canadian Mental Health Association:** The Canadian Mental Health Association is one of Canada's oldest and most established national mental health charities. Our vision is mentally healthy people in a healthy society. As the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA facilitates access to the resources people require to maintain and improve mental health and community integration, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness.



For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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<sup>i</sup> Ratnasingham S, Cairney J, Rehm J, Manson H, Kurdyak PA. (2012) *Opening Eyes, Opening Minds: The Ontario Burden of Mental Illness and Addictions Report* <https://www.ices.on.ca/Publications/Atlases-and-Reports/2012/Opening-Eyes-Opening-Minds>

<sup>ii</sup> Brien et al. (2015). *Taking Stock: A report on the quality of mental health and addictions services in Ontario*. An HQO/ICES Report. Toronto: Health Quality Ontario and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, as cited in Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (2012) *Mental Illness and Addictions: Facts and Statistics*. [http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/about\\_camh/newsroom/for\\_reporters/Pages/addictionsmentalhealthstatistics.aspx](http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/about_camh/newsroom/for_reporters/Pages/addictionsmentalhealthstatistics.aspx)

<sup>iii</sup> Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (2017) 2017- 2018 Published Plan and 2016-2017 Annual Report <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/plans/ppar17/>

<sup>iv</sup> Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (1979) *Estimated Allocations of Mental Health and Addictions Expenditures- 1979-1980*. Reports published by Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (No longer in publication and not available online).