

October 28, 2019

Dear Mayor John Tory and All City of Toronto Council Members:

Re: City Council Motion MM11.12

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Ontario Division supports **Council Motion MM11.12** by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam and seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy. Specifically, we support the following recommendations in the motion and encourage their adoption by City Council:

- 1. City Council request the Federal Government to adopt a Mental Health Parity Act to meet the Mental Health Commission of Canada's target of one dollar spent on mental health services for every dollar spent on physical health, as detailed in the report *Advancing the Mental Health Strategy for Canada: A Framework for Action (2017–2022)*.*
- 2. City Council request the Federal Government to provide \$300 million annually to address Toronto's mental health and addictions crises, and scale up evidence-based, community-oriented mental health services.*
- 3. City Council request the Federal Government to provide an additional \$600 million annually to the City of Toronto to help build 18,000 new supportive housing units over 10 years.*

Supportive housing is consistently identified as one of the top social determinants of health and has been noted as a priority investment by local CMHA branches. As noted by our colleague Steve Lurie, Executive Director of CMHA Toronto Branch, the additional 18,000 supportive housing units over 10 years are the bare *minimum*, given that nearly 17,000 people are on the wait list for supportive housing in Toronto.

Investing in supportive housing creates savings across the health care, social services and justice systems. As evidenced by the [At Home/Chez Soi](#) national housing study led by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, every \$10 invested in supportive housing resulted in an average savings of \$21.72. These cost-offsets are primarily through reduced psychiatric hospital stays, general hospital stays, home and office visits with community-based providers, jail/prison incarcerations, police contacts, emergency room visits, and stays in crisis housing settings and in single room accommodations with support services. Investing in supportive housing and focusing on the housing first approach is the first step to recovery from mental illnesses and addictions.

We commend Council for its consideration of this very important motion and encourage the City of Toronto to continue its commitment to supportive housing for people with mental health and addictions needs.

For further discussion, please feel free to contact me directly at cquenneville@ontario.cmha.ca

Sincerely,



Camille Quenneville
CEO
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario

About the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) operates at the local, provincial and national levels across Canada. The mission of CMHA Ontario – a not-for-profit, charitable organization funded by the provincial Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care – is to improve the lives of all Ontarians through leadership, collaboration and the 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. As a leader in community mental health and addictions, we are a trusted advisor to government and actively contribute to health systems development through policy formulation and recommendations that promote mental health for all Ontarians. We support our 30 community CMHA branches which, together with other community-based mental health and addictions service providers, serve approximately 500,000 Ontarians each year.