

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

Annual Report

April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

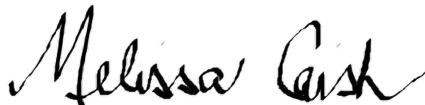
In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the 2025-26 Annual Report on behalf of the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) membership. The Advisory Council is a Category 3 government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and plans and reports under these requirements. My signature acknowledges the Advisory Council is accountable for the results reported.

This year, the Advisory Council advised on the implementation of **Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador**, the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan: Reducing Alcohol Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador**, and other program materials that are transforming the mental health and addictions system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Furthermore, I presented on behalf of the Advisory Council to the Honourable Lela Evans, former Minister of Health and Community Services and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, on the Advisory Council's priorities.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to all members of the Advisory Council for their continued dedication to mental health, substance use and addictions issues in the province. On behalf of the Advisory Council, I also extend appreciation for the efforts of staff within the Department of Health and Community Services for their support of the Advisory Council's important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Coish". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Coish, Chair
Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

Table of Contents

Overview	4
Membership.....	4
Funding	5
Meeting Frequency	5
Highlights and Partnerships	5
Report on Performance: Objectives 2023-2026	5
Opportunities and Challenges Ahead	8
Appendix A: Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council Membership	9

Overview

The Advisory Council reports to the Minister of Health and Community Services and advises on key mental health and addictions matters to support decision-making and policy development. The Advisory Council also provides input on and supports the Department of Health and Community Services with its oversight of the completion of all actions outlined in the five-year provincial action plans: **Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador (Our Path of Resilience)** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan: Reducing Alcohol Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador (Provincial Alcohol Action Plan)**.

The Advisory Council also provides input and advice on matters related to:

- Enhancing mental health and addressing mental illness, substance use and addiction;
- Fostering public awareness, education and anti-stigma efforts; and
- Addressing other priorities as they emerge.

The vision of the Advisory Council is that input provided by the council will affect positive changes in the mental health and addictions system.

Further information about the Advisory Council is located on the website for the Department of Health and Community Services and can be found at [Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council - Health and Community Services](#).

Membership

Council appointment recommendations are made by the Public Service Commission using a merit-based process in accordance with section 25(a) of the **Public Service Commission Act**. Members of the Advisory Council are then appointed by the Minister of Health and Community Services, and include individuals representing diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences (see Appendix A for membership list).

The Advisory Council brings diverse backgrounds, knowledge, and experience in mental health, substance use and addictions, and currently includes:

- Personal lived experience/family experience;
- Psychiatry and family medicine;
- Education;
- Health promotion and prevention; and
- Community organizations.

Member terms: Advisory Council members are appointed for a term of three years and may be re-appointed for one further term of three years, for a maximum of six years. Where the term of office expires and a successor has not been appointed, the member may continue to hold their position until a successor is appointed. Appointments were made in October 2024, including the Chair and Co-Chair positions.

Funding

Members are not remunerated for their participation on the Advisory Council. Administrative costs associated with Advisory Council meetings are covered by the Department of Health and Community Services.

The Advisory Council does not maintain a separate office, and secretariat support is provided by the Mental Health and Addictions Division, Department of Health and Community Services.

Meeting Frequency

In 2025-26, the Advisory Council held six virtual meetings. These meetings were held on:

- April 1, 2025;
- June 3, 2025;
- October 7, 2025;
- December 1, 2025;
- January 15, 2026; and
- February 3, 2026.

Because meetings were held virtually, no expenses were incurred.

Highlights and Partnerships

The Advisory Council maintains a strong partnership with the Department of Health and Community Services, the Provincial Indigenous Health Team and the Provincial Recovery Council for Mental Health and Addictions.

The highlights of 2025-26 included:

- Supported the Department of Health and Community Services' oversight on the implementation of **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan**;
- Prepared and submitted its annual report for 2024-25, which was posted on the House of Assembly website;
- Provided input during the consultation process of the Inpatient Addictions Treatment Review completed by Optimus SBR; and,
- Presented its priorities to the Minister of Health and Community Services.

Report on Performance: Objectives 2023-2026

The Advisory Council provides support to the Minister of Health and Community Services. As such, the following objective guides its direction for the period April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2026, and will be reported yearly for the duration of this period.

Issue

Provide oversight of the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan** and **Our Path of Resilience**.

The annual objective for the Advisory Council will remain the same until all actions contained in **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan** have been implemented. Simultaneously, the Advisory Council will continue to advise the Minister of

Health and Community Services on key mental health and addictions matters and trends to formulate effective decision making and policy development. The indicators will change annually as work progresses on the implementation of actions and as other priorities emerge.

Annual Objectives

By March 31, 2026, the Advisory Council will have provided the Minister with advice on key mental health and addictions matters to support decision-making and policy development, as well as provided input and oversight to advance work on all actions in **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan**.

Indicators:

- Provided input on all actions completed in **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan**;
- Obtained expert and group member expertise;
- Invited community groups and other organizations to present information;
- Attended presentations on mental health and addictions policies and programs;
- Provided advice to the Minister of Health and Community Services; and
- Made recommendations on government-led mental health and addictions initiatives.

Initiatives Measure: Provided commentary and recommendations.

Indicator	Outcome
Provided input on all actions completed in Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan	The Advisory Council provided input on the Inpatient Addictions Treatment Centre Review under the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan. They also provided input on the Suicide Surveillance Dashboard developed under Our Path of Resilience. Council members also provided input on actions completed under Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan during updates provided by the Mental Health and Addictions Division. Examples include: Gender-Responsive Standards of Practice; Postvention Supports and Resources; Suicide Surveillance Dashboard; and the Adult Mental Health and Addictions Facility.
Obtained expert and group member expertise	The Advisory Council continued to utilize the combined expertise of its members by providing feedback on Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan. An example of this is that a member of the Advisory Council co-presented with an official with the Mental Health and Addictions Division on Postvention supports and Resources.

Attended presentations on mental health and addictions policies and programs	Advisory Council members attended presentations on Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan. They also: • Invited an official from the Mental Health and Addictions Division and a member of the Advisory Council to present on Postvention Supports and Resources related to suicide; • Invited an official from the Mental Health and Addictions Division to provide an update on the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance-Use, and Addiction; • Invited an official from Health and Community Services to provide a demonstration of the Suicide Surveillance Dashboard; and • Invited an official with NL Health Services to present on the new Adult Mental Health and Addictions Facility.
Provided advice to the Minister	The Advisory Council, the Provincial Recovery Council for Mental Health and Addictions, and the Provincial Indigenous Health Team met with the Minister of Health and Community Services on January 15, 2026. The Advisory Council presented on its top priorities which include data collection and dissemination in relation to suicide and other mental health issues: continued focus on Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan; and the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions recommendations.
Made recommendations on government-led mental health and addictions initiatives	The Advisory Council made recommendations to the Minister of Health and Community services on their top priorities. They also made recommendations on several matters related to mental health and addictions services.

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Appointments were made to the Advisory Council in October 2024, including a new Chair and Co-Chair. These appointments will expire in 2027, so will need to be kept in view to begin the appointment/reappointment process in 2027.

There is evidence that social isolation, unemployment, domestic violence, and disrupted grief processes, among other factors, will continue to cause a surge in mental health and addictions challenges in the weeks, months, and years ahead due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Compounding factors, such as the ongoing housing crisis, will require a continued investment in mental health and addictions, coinciding with other efforts targeting the social determinants of health. The Advisory Council will continue to provide advice and oversight to ensure the mental health and addictions system meets the needs of the population.

The Advisory Council will also continue to provide guidance on the development of person-centered, community-based mental health, substance use and addictions programs as they are implemented throughout the province. Together with multiple partners, and with leadership from the Department of Health and Community Services, it looks forward to playing a key role in this challenging and transformative work.

**Appendix A: Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council Membership 2025-26
(as of March 31, 2026)**

Name	Current Experience
Melissa Coish	Chair, Healthcare Excellence Canada
Tina Davies	Vice-Chair, Richard's Legacy Foundation
Lynn Hiscock	Eastern School District
Dr. Jason Chaulk	NL Health Services
Shelly Collins	Canadian Red Cross
Brad Glynn	Lifewise
Barry Hewitt	NL Health Services
Jeffrey Hillyard	NL Housing and Homelessness Network
Linda Davidge	Red Cross Canada
Kara Whalen	Service Canada
Karen Beresford	Exploits Valley Community Coalition
Lorelei Kelly	NL Health Services
Leah Loder	NL Health Services

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council
Secretariat Support and General Inquiries: Mental Health and Addictions Division
Department of Health and Community Services
P.O. Box 8700, 1st Floor, West Block
Confederation Building, St. John's, NL A1B 4J6