

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

Annual Report

April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM CHAIR

In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the 2022–23 Annual Report for the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (the Advisory Council). The Advisory Council is a Category 3 government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and plans and reports under these requirements. As interim Chair, my signature below acknowledges the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council is accountable for the results reported.

The past year has been a productive year for the Advisory Council as many restrictions associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic have been lifted. To date, we have provided oversight on the substantial completion of all 54 recommendations of the **Towards Recovery Action Plan**. This year we 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. In March 2023, the Advisory Council, Recovery Council and Indigenous Health Team were involved in a Towards Recovery Panel Discussion at the Recovery Forum held in St. Johns with over 100 participants in attendance.

On behalf of the Advisory Council, we are honoured to have played a key role in continuing the work of **Towards Recovery** in transforming the mental health and addictions system in this province.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to all members of the Advisory Council for their continued dedication to mental health 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 in making our work possible.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Pollett, Interim Chair

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

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Overview

The Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) reports to the Minister of Health and Community Services (the Minister) on key mental health and addictions matters to formulate effective decision making and policy development; and provided oversight to the implementation of **Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador**.

Further information about the Advisory Council is located on the Department of Health and Community Services website and can be accessed [here](#).

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 the area of mental health and addictions, and currently includes:

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

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 2022-23, the Advisory Council held eight virtual meetings. These meetings were held on April 8, 2022, May 12, 2022, June 9, 2022, September 8, 2022, November 10, 2022, December 8, 2022, January 19, 2023, and February 16, 2023. Because meetings were held virtually, no expenses have been incurred. In general, all costs incurred by the Advisory Council are administrative and covered by the Department of Health and Community Services.

Highlights and Partnerships

The Advisory Council maintains a strong partnership with the Department of Health and Community Services and the Provincial Recovery Council for Mental Health and Addictions in providing oversight on the implementation of **Towards Recovery** recommendations. Its diverse membership also reflects the many community partnerships that support the work of the Advisory Council.

The highlights of 2022-23 include:

- Provided oversight on the implementation of **Towards Recovery** recommendations.
- Provided input on the development of the following: Social and Economic Well-Being Plan; Family Caregivers Provincial Practice Standards; Provincial Practice Recovery Guidelines; and the implementation of the Mental Health and Addictions Inpatient Acute-Care Standards;
- Attended presentations on the following: the implementation of **Towards Recovery**; the Implementation of the Mental Health and Addictions Inpatient Acute Care Standards; Social and Economic Well-Being Plan; CMHA-NL Embracing Experiences; 811 HealthLine; **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan; Our Path of Resilience**; New Adult Mental Health and Addictions Facility; Health Accord Recommendations Specific to Mental Health and Addictions; and Choices for Youth's Integrated Youth Services Project.
- Participated in a **Towards Recovery** Panel Discussion held at Recovery Forum 2023 on March 7, 2023 in St. John's.

In addition to their role with the Advisory Council, members were invited to participate on the COVID-19 Vulnerable Populations Task Group to support pandemic planning for issues related to mental health and addictions.

There were 14 Vulnerable Population Task Group meetings held in 2022 and the Advisory Council Chair attended most meetings, providing valuable input on the pandemic response on behalf of the Advisory Council. Furthermore, several Advisory Council members joined the Vulnerable Population Task Group representing their community agency and/or lived experience, which aided the Task Group with informed planning for the pandemic and improved communication with the Advisory Council.

Report on Performance: Objectives 2020-2023

The Advisory Council provides support to the Minister of Health and Community Services in an advisory capacity. As such, the following objective guided its direction for the period April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2023, and was reported on yearly for the duration of this period.

As can be seen in the table below, the Advisory Council achieved its Objective and Indicators outlined in the Activity Plan during the 2020-23 reporting period. The Advisory Council was flexible and adapted to restrictions associated with the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic to fulfill its mandate.

Issue: Provide oversight for the implementation of recommendations in **Towards Recovery**. The Advisory Council is embedded into the **Towards Recovery** governance structure, thus providing meaningful input and oversight into the implementation of the recommendations.

Annual Objective

By March 31, 2023, the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council will have provided advice and oversight to the Minister of Health and Community Services regarding implementation of **Towards Recovery** recommendations.

Indicators:

- Obtained expert and group member expertise
- Invited community groups and other organizations to present information
- Prioritized advice provided to the Minister
- Made recommendations to government-led mental health and addictions initiatives

Measure: Provided commentary and recommendations.

| Indicator | Outcome |
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| Obtained expert and group member expertise | During the period covered by the current Activity Plan (2020-23), the Advisory Council provided expertise during regularly scheduled meetings and by email or teleconference, outside of regularly scheduled meetings. The Advisory Council continued to utilize the combined expertise of its members by reviewing and providing feedback on Towards Recovery documents, Our Path of Resilience , the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan , and other emerging priorities. The Advisory Council has also provided oversight on the implementation of several Towards Recovery recommendations. |

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| <p>Invited community groups and other organizations to present information</p> | <p>During 2022-23, the Advisory Council continued to focus on the implementation of Towards Recovery recommendations. Presentations informed the Advisory Council’s oversight of the recommendations. Presentations included the following:</p> <p><u>2020-21</u> No formal presentations by community groups or other organizations occurred given community groups’ efforts were placed on responding to needs associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Vulnerable Persons Task Group.</p> <p><u>2021-22</u> Updates on Towards Recovery; Opioid Dependence Therapy; Dialectical Behavior Therapy; Inpatient Acute-Care Standards; MHBASES; Integrated Service Delivery; Mental Health in Corrections; Mental Health and Addictions Dashboard; Breaking Free: Mental Health and Addictions System Navigator; and the naming of the new mental health and addictions facility.</p> <p><u>2022-23</u> The implementation of Towards Recovery; the Implementation of the Mental Health and Addictions Inpatient Acute Care Standards; Social and Economic Well-Being Plan; CMHA-NL Embracing Experiences; 811 HealthLine; Alcohol Action Plan: Life Promotion Suicide Prevention Action Plan; new adult mental health and addictions facility; health accord recommendations specific to mental health and addictions; and an Integrated Youth Services Project.</p> <p>The Advisory council was kept informed of the work of the Recovery Council through regular updates by its Chair.</p> <p>In January 2022, the Advisory Council and the Recovery Council were involved in a Towards Recovery Panel Discussion which was attended virtually by over 60 participants. The Panel Discussion included presentations by Lifewise, Choices for Youth, U-TURN Drop-in Centre, Stella’s Circle and CMHA-NL.</p> <p>In March 2023, the Advisory Council, Recovery Council and Indigenous Health Team were involved in a Panel Discussion at the Recovery Forum held in St. Johns with over 100 participants in attendance.</p> |
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| <p>Prioritized advice provided to the Minister of Health and Community Services</p> | <p>During the 2020-23 period, Advisory Council feedback and advice was provided to the Minister on many areas related to mental health and addictions. Priority topics included:</p> <p><u>2020-21</u> The model of care for health in corrections; provincial expansion of opioid dependence treatment hubs; the provincial stepped-care model; mental health triage and a provincial psychiatry referral process.</p> <p><u>2021-22</u> The model of care for health in corrections; provincial expansion of opioid dependence treatment hubs; Our Path of Resilience; the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan; and Gender Responsive Standards of Practice.</p> <p><u>2022-23</u> Social and Economic Well-Being Plan; Family Caregivers Provincial Practice Standards; Provincial Practice Recovery Guidelines; and implementation of the Mental Health and Addictions Inpatient Acute-Care Standards.</p> |
| <p>Made recommendations to government-led mental health and addictions initiatives</p> | <p>Made recommendations to government-led mental health and addictions initiatives, as part of the provincial mental health and addictions system transformation.</p> |

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

The appointment terms for the Advisory Council's current interim chairperson and council members have expired. The process to identify new candidates to be considered for appointments is underway and appointments are expected to be made in the near term.

There is evidence that social isolation, unemployment, domestic violence, and disrupted grief processes, among other factors, will cause a surge in mental health and addictions challenges in the weeks, months, and years ahead due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This 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 guidance 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 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, we look forward to playing a key role in this challenging and transformative work.

Appendix A: Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council Membership 2022-23

| Name | Current Experience |
|-------------------------|---|
| Sheldon Pollett | Interim Chair, Community Service Provider - Youth |
| Angela Crockwell | Community Service Provider - Youth |
| Angie Wilmott | Schools Guidance Counsellor/Psychologist |
| Des Coombs | Psychologist |
| Dr. Greg Radu | Psychiatrist, Eastern Health |
| Michelle Kinney | Nunatsiavut Government |
| George Skinner | Social worker, Community Advocate |

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