

SURVEY RESPONSE
CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Organization: Canadian Mental Health Association

Date: September 13th, 2021

Question 1: The pandemic has taken a devastating toll on the mental health of Canadians and exposed glaring gaps in our mental health care system. If elected, what specific actions will your party take to make meaningful and sustained investments to close these critical gaps and ensure every Canadian has access to quality mental health care in their own community, no matter where they live?

Question 2: As many mental health services are often delivered outside of hospitals and physicians' offices, they are not considered medically necessary under the *Canada Health Act* and, as such, are excluded from the federal government's Canada Health Transfer (CHT) to provinces and territories. If elected, what steps would your party take to improve accountability, funding and access to mental health services so that it is treated on par with physical health?

Answer to Question 1 & 2:

The pandemic has deepened Canada's mental health crisis, especially for our youth. According to CMHA's own research, one in five Canadians suffer from depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder. Canada's Conservatives will address the mental health crisis by recognizing that mental health is health and making historic investments to help those in need.

Conservatives will deliver our Canada Mental Health Action Plan, which will massively boost health transfers to the provinces by at least six per cent annually, doubling the Liberal commitment and providing nearly \$60 billion more for health care over the next 10 years. We will partner with the provinces to invest in mental health as the priority it is with the goal of providing enough funding through health transfers for an additional million Canadians to receive mental health treatment every year. We will also encourage employers to add mental health coverage to their employee benefit plans by offering a tax credit for 25 per cent of the cost of additional mental health coverage for the first three years.

As well, we will provide \$150 million over three years in grants to nonprofits and charities delivering mental health and wellness programming, and create a nationwide, three-digit suicide prevention hotline so that consistent help is available everywhere in Canada.

Question 3: A crucial social determinant of health is supportive and affordable housing, which ensures that people with mental illnesses and substance use problems have safe places to live as they recover. If elected, what specific investments and additional supports would your party put in place on supportive housing? How would your party ensure that people living with mental health illnesses and substance use problems are able to access affordable housing?

Canada's Conservatives will treat addiction as the health emergency that it is. Those who are suffering should be kept safe and supported in their recovery, not prosecuted. We will make recovery the overarching goal of the Government of Canada's substance abuse policy framework, so that everyone suffering from addiction has the opportunity to recover and lead a drug-free life.

With Canada's Recovery Plan, we will also re-implement the highly successful Housing First approach to aid in the fight against Canada's addictions crisis.

We will enhance the viability of using Community Land Trusts for affordable housing by creating an incentive for corporations and private landowners to donate property to these land trusts for the development of affordable housing. Community Land Trusts are nonprofit, community-based organizations designed to ensure community stewardship of land. However, they are often underutilized when it comes to ensuring the availability of affordable housing for residents who might otherwise be priced out of the market.

Canada's Conservatives will also enact a "For Indigenous, By Indigenous" strategy as part of our commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. This approach has long been called for by Indigenous housing advocates and will empower Canada's Indigenous communities to meet their own housing needs, and end the federal government's paternalistic approach to housing.

Question 4: Indigenous people in Canada have not only been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, they have endured sustained trauma as a result of colonialism, including the legacy of residential schools. If elected, what specific investments will your party introduce to scale up Indigenous-led mental health care to advance Reconciliation and better support Indigenous communities?

Tragically, Indigenous people die by suicide at much higher rates than non-Indigenous people. Driven by a combination of intergenerational trauma, poverty and many other factors, this ongoing crisis in mental health has only been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To advance reconciliation, Canada's Recovery Plan will reduce barriers to accessing mental health support that Indigenous peoples too often face. We will provide \$1 billion over five years in new funding for Indigenous mental health and addiction programs - the single largest investment in Indigenous mental health in Canadian history. This funding will support culturally appropriate programs and supports, including those delivered in Indigenous languages.

We will work with willing First Nations to transition away from an Ottawa-knows-best approach to service delivery, while moving towards self-governance where First Nations themselves can deliver education, health and family services.

Question 5: The opioid crisis has worsened over the course of the pandemic and made evident the reality that many people who use substances lack access to the treatment and supports they need to survive and thrive. They often face significant challenges due to stigma, criminalization and structural and racial inequalities. If elected, what specific steps would your party take to comprehensively support people who use substances and what action would your party take to amend federal laws and policies surrounding controlled substances?

Amidst the pandemic, too many families have been torn apart and had their lives destroyed by the opioid epidemic. Every day, 17 Canadians die from opioid-related deaths. Since the onset of COVID-19, opioid-related deaths have almost doubled.

Canada's Conservatives will treat addiction as the health emergency that it is. Those who are suffering should be kept safe and supported in their recovery, not prosecuted. We will make recovery the overarching goal of the Government of Canada's substance abuse policy framework, so that everyone suffering from addiction has the opportunity to recover and lead a drug-free life.

With Canada's Recovery Plan, we will invest \$325 million over the next three years to create 1,000 residential drug treatment beds and build 50 recovery community centres across the country so that those suffering and their families can get the help they need to recover.

As mentioned previously, we will also partner with Indigenous communities with high needs to enhance addictions treatment and prevention services that are culturally appropriate and in the appropriate Indigenous language. That includes our historic \$1 billion commitment in new funding for Indigenous mental health and addiction programs.