

The Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI) Applauds Provincial Budget and Increased Funding for Mental Health and Addictions

TORONTO (April 28, 2022) – Today the Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI), an association representing over 50 community-based family and peer support organizations known as Consumer Survivor Initiatives (CSIs), applaud the commitment made in the provincial Budget to increase funding for the mental health and addictions sector by \$204M.

“As the only dedicated, province-wide voice for people with lived experience and the province’s network of community-based peer-support organizations, the OPDI is pleased to support this budget and the additional resources it is making to the mental health and addictions sector. We hope that this will mean more resources for community-based peer and family support organizations, and our hard-working ‘frontline’ staff who are helping thousands of people a year in their respective drop-in centres and other settings,” said Laura Pearson, Executive Director.

CSIs play a unique and complementary role in the provincial approach to mental health service delivery. The drop-in nature of a CSI allows for immediate care to be provided as Ontarians wait for clinical support with a psychiatrist, psychologist or other caregiver. In many cases they provide a preventative resource, diverting would-be clinical patients from the over-burdened hospital sector. In other cases, they help individuals adapt to normal life after being discharged from their hospital. CSIs are also able to help find individuals meaningful employment and have helped launch many social enterprises throughout the province.

“We believe the additional funding made in this year’s budget is needed at a time where many mental health organizations are struggling with an increased workload. We believe the community-based peer and family support segment has been an undervalued component of Ontario’s Mental Health and Addictions infrastructure for a long time, and that there is a place for people with lived experience to help shape the system,” said Pearson. “An increased yearly allocation to CSIs through this investment will greatly increase capacity, while providing the greatest value for money to government.”

About OPDI

OPDI has been the voice of lived experience and community-based peer and family support for over 30 years. The association supports over 50 local Consumer-Survivor Initiatives (CSIs), Peer Support Organizations (PSOs), and other programs across Ontario by highlighting the achievements and challenges of the many individuals who use these resources. The programs and services are found in independent community organizations, Community Mental Health Agencies, Hospitals, Universities and Colleges, Police Departments and through First Responders, as well as Legal Associations. OPDI

represents their interests at the provincial mental health and addiction policy planning and strategy implementation tables.

OPDI's mission is to acquire, understand, and amplify the unique and distinct voice of Consumer-Survivor organizations across Ontario. The experiential expertise of our peers will shape the mental health system to achieve a valued, recovery-oriented, community-based approach to support.

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