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“THE ONTARIO PEER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (OPDI) SUPPORTS RE-INTRODUCTION OF ONTARIO BUDGET 2022: CALLS FOR MORE FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY-BASED PEER AND FAMILY SUPPORT”

TORONTO (August 9, 2022) – Today the Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI) congratulates the Ford government on reintroducing the *Plan to Build Act (Budget Measures), 2022*. The bill, when passed, will commit the government to spending an additional \$204 million in mental health. The OPDI signalled optimism that the government’s commitment to mental health and addictions remains central to its mandate, and hopes the bill will pass in the near term. The OPDI hopes to see a portion of the promised increase in funding for mental health allocated to community-based peer and family support.

“As the only province-wide voice for lived experience and community-based peer and family support organizations, we would like to commend this government on ensuring that the broader mental health and addictions sector has increased resources to address the growing needs of Ontarians,” said Allyson Theodorou, Managing Director. “We trust the new funding will be allocated in a way that takes in to account the value of community-based services like those offered through our network of consumer survivor initiatives (CSIs), and peer support organizations (PSOs).”

OPDI has been an advocate for peer support organizations and lived experience for over 30 years in Ontario. As a representative of the community-based segment, the organization promotes collaboration with clinical mental health and addiction services, and leverages its pan-provincial network of CSIs to help address gaps in the system.

“Our members are counting on a sustainable increase in financial and human resources to maintain and grow their effectiveness in communities across the province. We urge the government to use this increased funding to recognize and bolster peer support,” said Theodorou. “We have over 50 CSI and PSO members who are struggling to cope with the steady increase in our community members’ needs, and we look forward to working with government to ensure those additional pressures and the needs of Ontarians are met.”

OPDI and its members plan to continue to raise awareness for the community-based peer and family support segment in Ontario, while continuing to educate and inform the Province’s consultation on the *Plan to Build Act (Budget Measures), 2022* as it works its way through the legislative process.

About Ontario Peer Development Initiative

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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