

The Waterford Hospital in St. John's

THE SILENT VICTIMS

The recent provincial budget has earmarked \$8.7 million to enhance mental health and addictions services in Newfoundland and Labrador. But is it enough to battle a growing problem?

BY KEVIN KELLY

The next time you are at your local supermarket or general store, take a look around at 10 random people who are near you.

What if we told you that research shows that two of those 10 people have or will have a mental illness?

It's a harrowing fact recently brought to light by the Canadian Mental Health Association, and it's a growing problem governments have to deal with.

"Mental health is an important part of our overall health and well-being," says Peter Coleridge, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). "There is still a significant amount of misunderstanding surrounding mental health issues," says Coleridge. "We need to change society's attitudes and behaviours so that people with mental health problems can be supported in managing or recovering from their illness like any other illness."



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), by the year 2020, depression will become the number two cause worldwide of

years lost due to disability. In fact, mental illness is the number one leading cause of disability worldwide.

BREAKING DOWN THE STIGMA

It also brings down the stigma that mental problems affect only a sheltered few. Breaking down that stigma is one of the biggest challenges faced by those trying to battle the growing problem of mental issues.

You see, contrary to popular belief, health minister Jerome Kennedy says mental illness can affect anyone, at any time.

"Mental illness and addictions affect people of all ages, cultures, educational backgrounds and income levels and have a significant impact on individuals, families and our communities," Kennedy, the provincial Minister of Health and Community Services, stated recently as the provincial government announced a number of measures in its recent budget to increase awareness and ensure services are strengthened within the province. "This is a very serious and complex issue, and our investments through Budget 2011 are in-

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tended to help reduce the stigma associated with mental health and addictions issues and encourage people to seek help."

REPLACING THE WATERFORD

Included in that budget is \$4.5 million in initial planning to replace the Waterford Hospital in St. John's with a new specialized mental health facility in the capital city.

The Waterford Hospital was first founded in 1854, making it the island's oldest institution to care for those suffering from mental illness.

The total cost of the new facility will be \$250 million and is expected to be completed hopefully within the next four to five years.

"The issues and challenges of mental illness are not new, but many of the ways in which we plan to address them are," said Minister Kennedy. "A new mental health facility will help promote recovery, reduce stress and depression, support independence and overall contribute to better outcomes for achieving mental wellness."

While there is still a long way to go before "The Waterford" is replaced, it's hoped the new specialized mental health facility will support a modernization of the approach to treating those with mental illness. According to the government, the new facility will provide a more functional floor plan and efficient inpatient units that meet current space standards. It will also reduce the maintenance costs associated with the current facility, better meet programming needs and allow for future growth."

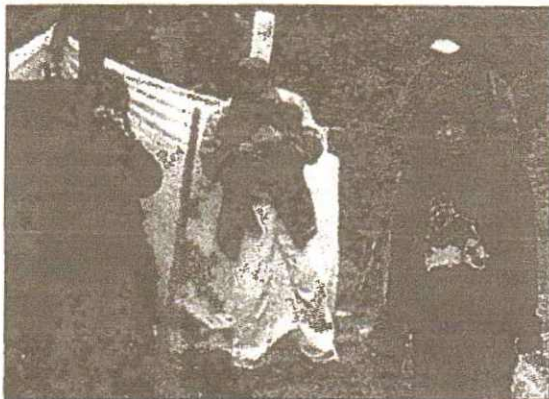
The other big challenge for the provincial government is increasing rural capacity to address mental health and addictions issues.

The most recent budget allotted \$3.2 million in addressing these issues. Most of the funding (\$2.2 million) will help place five, full-time mental health and addictions counsellors in a number of communities in Labrador, including Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik and Nat-

uashish. It's hoped that having these counsellors living in the communities will provide greater access to services for individuals dealing with issues of suicide, substance abuse, violence and depression within these aboriginal communities. "Aboriginal communities often face significant challenges related to mental health and addictions. Our government recognizes these challenges, and through investments in Budget 2011 is providing the necessary resources to properly address these complex issues."

There will also be enhancements in areas such as Placentia, Bonne Bay, Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor, Labrador West, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, as well as a number of organizations including the CMHA, Consumer Health Awareness Network of Newfoundland and Labrador (CHANNAL) as well as Choices For Youth."

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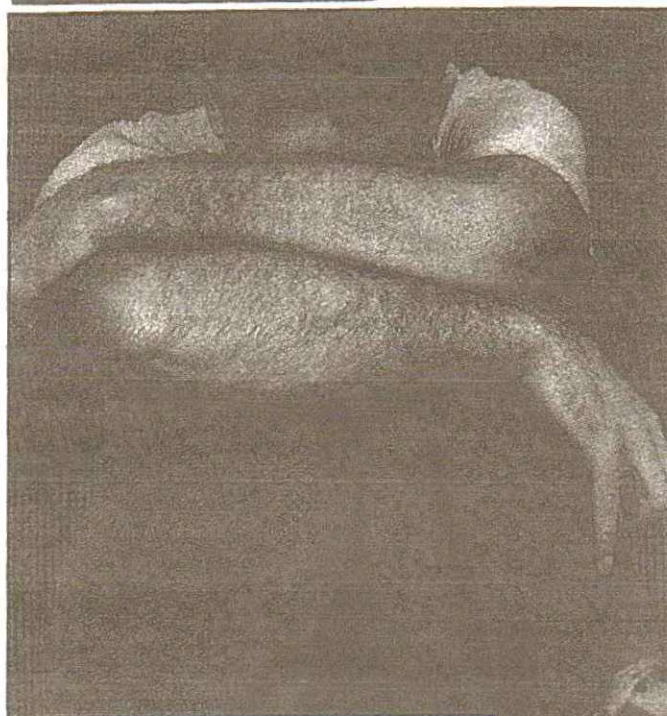
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ing a million dollars to develop an interactive, web based e-mental health service, enhancement to telemental health services to improve rural and remote access to counselling, as well as a new public awareness campaign to increase local understanding about the problem.

"We know that one in five people suffers from some form of mental illness and it is estimated that by 2020, depression will be the second leading cause of disability in the world, after heart disease," said Minister Kennedy. "There are many ways that we can



From 1997-2007, according to Statistics Canada, police reported drug offences in Newfoundland and Labrador were up 27.8 per cent over the decade, and it's expected that trend is continuing with recent high-profile drug busts.



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support people living with mental health and addictions issues and much of it begins with increasing our understanding of the issues and providing access for those who need help."

IMPROVING ACCESS

On the addictions side, there are also no shortage of issues to face ahead.

From 1997-2007, according to Statistics Canada, police reported drug offences in Newfoundland and Labrador were up 27.8 per cent over the decade, and it's



expected that trend is continuing with recent high-profile drug busts.

The province announced in the 2010 provincial budget \$2 million for the planning and development of an adult residential addictions treatment centre in Harbour Grace.

That new treatment centre will help meet the needs of individuals who require longer-term residential treatment or those that have more severe, persistent addiction issues. The new centre will complement the Humberwood Treatment Centre in Corner Brook, which provides short-term treatment.

Exactly \$2.4 million was allotted in that particular budget for continued planning and construction of a new residential treatment centre for children and youth with complex mental health needs and/or behavioral issues to be located in St. John's and \$2 million to further a new residential treatment centre in Grand Falls-Windsor for children and youth with addictions. "It's been two years. We're hoping to start construction of the Grand Falls-Windsor site soon," Kennedy

told reporters recently, who added that the former site of Paradise Elementary is being considered for the St. John's area facility. ▲

MENTAL HEALTH: THE STARTLING FACTS



Each year employers and insurers spend a whopping \$8.5 billion on long-term disability claims related to mental illness.

- One in five Canadians, over the course of their lives, will experience a mental illness and what that ultimately means is that every single family in Canada will in some way be affected.
- The number of suicides in Canada is almost 4,000 people a year. For people aged 15 to 24 in Canada, suicide is the No. 2 cause of death.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), five of the 10 leading causes of disability are related to mental disorders.
- Mental illness costs the Canadian economy a staggering \$51-billion a year, and each day 500,000 people will miss work due to mental health problems.
- Each year employers and insurers spend a whopping \$8.5 billion on long-term disability claims related to mental illness.
- Mental illness is the number one cause of disability in Canada, accounting for nearly 30% of disability claims and 70% of total costs. Mental health disorders in the workplace cost Canadian companies nearly 14% of their net annual profits and up to \$16 billion annually.
- The unemployment rate among people with serious mental illness is 70-90%. There is a 60% drop in family income when a breadwinner is diagnosed with mental illness.

For more facts and figures on mental health, visit <http://www.cmha.ca>.