

Mental Health, Addictions and Poverty – Keynote Panel Presentation

Making Gains 2009 in Mental Health and Addictions

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Purpose

- A panel of experts will present, discuss and take questions on the experience and effect of poverty on individuals with mental health and addictions issues.
- The focus of the discussion will include how can we, in the mental health and addictions sector, advocate and take action in ways that will have a meaningful effect on the lives of those living in poverty with mental health and addictions issues.

Moderator: *David Reville, Psychiatric Survivor and Teacher*

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The Panelists

- **Panel Members:** *Jeff Turnbull, President-Elect of CMA;*
- **Brad Mulder and Mike Creek, Representatives from Voices from the Street;**
- **Vivian Labrie, Poverty Activist from Quebec**

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Introduction

If we want to improve the mental health of people in Ontario, we have to do something about poverty.

The sponsors of this conference, jointly and separately, have been urging the adoption of strategies to reduce poverty.

Leading off our discussion today are three people who have become poverty activists because they know first hand what it's like to be poor.

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Introduction (cont'd)

And we'll hear from a doctor who helped found an organization that wants to build a "community in which individuals who are chronically homeless have equitable access to the supports and services they require to maintain or improve their health."

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Points to Consider

- Poverty and the determinants of health:
 - the direct link between poverty and poor health-the definitions of poverty and ill health are converging.
 - it is a human rights issue - poverty leads to poor health, then poor health leads to further poverty and the cycle continues.
- Examples of successful strategies in dealing with poverty, mental health and addictions:
 - There needs to be consensus around successful strategies and wide dissemination to all stakeholders so that they become part of public health policy.
- Multiple different jurisdictions that have to be on board:
 - Successful integration is difficult and is complicated by differing institutional priorities, budgetary strategies, operational issues and differences and philosophy. Examples of successful, truly integrated programs, directed towards a targeted intervention are rare.
- Poverty is expensive (especially in mental health and addictions)

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Points to Consider

- Breaking the Cycle of Poverty, building stronger, healthier communities.
- Opportunity and Choices for all (social purpose enterprises) education, training... etc
- Measuring poverty LIM, (deprivation index)
- Moving forward with the Social Assistance review (adequacy, removing rules that keep people boxed into Social Assistance)
- Housing Plan that includes Safe Affordable Supportive housing
- Cost of Poverty, Social Exclusion
- Importance of hearing the voices of those who have a lived experience so that we can create better policy, rebuilding a society that is a more caring and sharing place
- Good jobs and a fair wage that lifts people working full time out of poverty. Increase the WITB.



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Points to Consider

- **Reminders of a ten year timeline in Québec :**
Let's dream logically, Let's do it and it will get done, Let's stay there because it will get undone, Keep the word
- **Poverty and mental health or double bind social settings ?**
Instead of having us climb downward escalators, take care of the escalators.
- **About categories and their good poor/bad poor traps :**
There is no such thing as two kinds of human beings
- **About indicators :** does welfare income cover essential needs ?
(possible indicator : Market basket measure), does minimum wage lead out of poverty ? (indicator needed), is crucial knowledge (frameworks, solutions and indicators) built with those living the troubles ?



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Advocate by..

- Advocate for poverty reduction strategies in terms of a human rights framework.
- Collate and disseminate best practices models.
- Advocate for programmatic management that crosses institutional boundaries
- Participate in economic analyses to demonstrate effective interventions that are also cost-effective.

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