



## SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

March 4, 2021

The Honourable Jason Kenney  
Office of the Premier  
307 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

Dear Premier,

We have been pleased to hear your expression of awareness and concern of the toll that COVID and the downturn in the economy are taking on all Albertans' mental health. We share your concerns – especially for Alberta's vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Those living with mental health or addiction problems and their care providers and loved ones face significant challenges at the best of times. This past year these challenges have been magnified. Medical services, housing, social support and financial assistance are stretched to the point of being overwhelmed - not to mention the increasing emotional burden for management and staff providing these services.

This letter is sent to you by the people and organizations listed below. We want to help.

In 1999, the Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (later changed to the Alberta Alliance on Mental Health) was formed by concerned professionals and not for profit organizations in the mental health and addictions fields. The intent was to identify issues of common concern related to mental health and addiction and raise these issues to the awareness of Government and large service providers and, where possible and appropriate, work with Government on ways to address these concerns. Changes to the Mental Health Act and the Mental Health Provincial Diversion Program's establishment are just two examples of the successful collaboration between the Alliance and Government. Unfortunately, with the termination of funding in the spring of 2020, the Alliance was forced to suspend formal operations after over 20 years of successful collaboration with Government.

While the Alliance has ceased formal operations, the challenges facing persons with mental illness and addictions continue – in fact, due to the pandemic and changing economy, they have increased. Consequently, many of the organizations - noted below – have seen worth in forming an informal network to offer our services to work with the Government to assist in developing strategies that can help address the needs of these at-risk populations during this crisis.

Children and their families, those living with a mental health and/or addiction problem, those experiencing homelessness, the elderly coping with loneliness and isolation and, now, even first

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responders and care providers overwhelmed by the demands placed upon them during the time of this pandemic, need help. There is a need.

We request an opportunity to meet with you and members of your caucus to hear your thoughts about how we may be able to help Government and other service providers respond to the needs of these people in crisis. We welcome your ideas and insight into how we can assist the Government in meeting these challenges.

Respectfully submitted,

Rubyann Rice  
Provincial Executive Director - **Schizophrenia Society of Alberta (SSA)**

Copied to:

Dr. Andrew Greenshaw  
Associate Chair, Research - **Department of Psychiatry, University of Alberta**  
Board Member - **Our House Addiction Recovery Centre**

Barbara Lowe  
Chief Executive Officer - **College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta (CRPNA)**

Scott Phillips  
Assistant Chair, Administration - **Department of Psychiatry, University of Alberta**  
Board Member - **Our House Addiction Recovery Centre**  
Board Chair - **CASA Foundation**

Ronda Barraclough  
Executive Director – **ALIGN Association of Community Services**

Andrew Carr  
Executive Director - **Alberta Network for Mental Health (ANMH)**

Kaj Korvala  
Executive Director - **Organization for Bipolar Affective Disorders (OBAD)**

Dr. Judi L. Malone  
Chief Executive Officer - **Psychologists' Association of Alberta (PAA)**

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