

December 6, 2017

The Honourable Helena Jaczek, MPP
Minister of Community and Social Services
6th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor St
Toronto ON M7A 1E9

Dear Minister Jaczek,

I am writing to express CAMH's support for the recently released report: 'Income Security: A Roadmap for Change'. The vision, principles and recommendations outlined in the Roadmap will improve the lives of many CAMH patients and other low-income Ontarians with mental illness.

People with mental illness are more likely to live in poverty than people with other types of disabilities and people without disabilities. Many rely on social assistance because they are unable to work or unable to find and maintain suitable employment. Currently, Ontario's income support rates are inadequate and the social assistance system itself is complex and punishing.

The Roadmap proposes a renewed social assistance system based on the commendable themes of respect, dignity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous self-governance. It recommends a simpler, less coercive social assistance system that will be easier for people with mental illness to navigate. Proposed increases to income support rates, a flat rate structure and a housing benefit will put more money in people's pockets and improve access to safe and secure housing. Extended health benefits will ensure that low-income people with mental illness who are not on income supports can still access essential medications. A new 'assured income' model of ODSP will make it easier for people with mental illness to engage with the workforce – though an increase in the earned income exemption would also assist those who are able to work.

The Roadmap presents a welcome change to Ontario's social assistance system. CAMH encourages the government to move forward with the Roadmap's vision, principles and recommendations. This new social assistance system will improve health and wellbeing for people with mental illness and provide them with the opportunity to fully participate in their communities.

Sincerely,

Catherine Zahn, MD, FRCP(C)
President and CEO