



What's Happening in Canada?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Canada is the only G8 nation without a national mental health strategy and mental health is the most under-served part of the health care system. This seems rather strange considering the fact that one out of five Canadians will experience a mental illness at some time in life.

But changes are coming.

In 2007 the Mental Health Commission of Canada was formed. Its objectives are to create a practical guide for mental health transformation through a ten-year mental health promotion and discrimination campaign. At its base is a goal of developing knowledge for Canadians and conducting research projects involving homeless individuals. Eight national volunteer advisory committees will be formed which focus on various segments including child and youth, family caregivers, First Nation Inuit and Metis, mental health and the law, science, seniors, the service system and the workforce.

It is hoped that the Commission will have a lasting and positive impact on the health and daily lives of Canadians from coast to coast.

Other provincial initiatives are also in progress in Canada. For example, in Alberta, mental health and addictions services are being merged into one seamless service which will provide single entry for assessment and treatment of individuals. This should save time, money and frustration for professionals and clients, especially those who have a dual diagnosis.

The entire health care system in Alberta is changing in a number of other ways. Health regions which were previously localized have now been centralized under one provincial "super" board of directors. This change is being debated by citizens who have been openly expressing their opinions about whether it will help or hinder. Some believe that the centralization under one board will save money whereas others believe that the members of the super board do not have a regional perspective, and, because of this, communities will not have their needs met.

The Alberta government has also eliminated premiums for health care services beginning on January 1, 2009. Although individuals and families appear to be happy about this there is always the underlying concern that services need to be paid for and that taxpayers will ultimately end up paying in another form.

It is interesting to note that whenever change is introduced, there are always some who support the ideas while others oppose them. Well, new change is coming, changes are in progress and changes are expected throughout Canada when it comes to health care. So, I guess we had better be prepared to listen to the debates!