

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs- January 24, 2020

Niagara Region, Ontario- Sarah Cannon, Parent & Shaun Baylis, CEO

Shaun

- Thank you for this opportunity to speak openly to you: my name is Shaun and I am the CEO of Pathstone Mental Health and Children's Lead Agency

Sarah

- I am Sarah Cannon, representing family voice and perspective
- I come here today as a mother of two children who have both dealt with significant mental health disorders, as well as a wife who lost her husband and father of her children to mental illness when he took his life. I made my first presentation to a committee much like this about 15 years ago, and the messaging then was the same as it is today regarding inadequate funding.
- As a mother I continue to be struck by the work that this sector needs to do to "prove the return on an investment to early intervention and treatment" when really it should just come down to what is the right thing to do considering our children and youth are dying at alarming rates due to mental illnesses. We hear more and more of the epidemic of youth deaths caused by suicide. Why do we not have the same conversations around cancer treatment for children and youth? Suicide claims more lives each year than all the childhood cancers combined. We do not make a child diagnosed with cancer wait upwards of 18 months for treatment knowing that withholding treatment could ultimately cause their illness to become fatal, yet we seem to sanction that when treating mental illness.
- In my family I can definitively say that an early investment in my children would have saved the Province money, and an early investment in my husband would have saved his life.
- When my youngest daughter started to exhibit symptoms of anxiety and depression she was placed on multiple waiting lists. As she sat on waiting lists

without any services her condition became worse, as most illnesses left untreated will. She was then placed on different, longer wait lists for different programs because her case had become more complex. Before ever getting off a waiting list and into treatment I found her hanging in her bedroom.

- Putting aside the fact that her life could have been lost, I can look at that from a financial perspective. An in-patient hospital stay for now both physical injuries and mental illness was far more costly to this Province than access to treatment early and out-patient therapies that would have prevented her illness from exacerbating to a nearly fatal outcome.
- My oldest daughter as well has struggled since she was five, and we have done all we can to access early intervention and treatment programs that would support her, but again, her condition became so severe she required hospitalization, and has just been discharged after a 43 day stay in hospital. I do not know what the actual cost to the Province of that stay, but a recent report by the Canadian Health Institute states “that mental health disorders are among the top ten most expensive conditions to treat in hospital”.
- In a time where we are trying to end hallway medicine and design health services that wrap around patients in their homes and communities, why do we continue to not adequately fund a system that has the ability to keep children and youth out of hospital and ultimately decrease costs to our health system, and increase the capacity to cope and heal from illness? As a mother, and also a voter, this does not make sense to me. Where will have the largest return on our investment provincially? – Through investment in community based mental health care,
- I truly hope that we can realize as a Province that an investment in community-based mental health care for our children and youth is needed, required, and integral to not only saving our Province money, but saving the lives of the children and youth who represent our future, and is this not the greatest priority we have, to care for and protect our children and youth.
- How many years will we have these same conversations trying to demonstrate how costly not adequately funding our community-based services is and how

significant this is to hundreds of thousands families in this province? And when will we change the conversation to include that some of these costs cannot ever be measured in dollars and cents?

STATS

- 1-5 children are suffering from Mental Health issues
- 1-4 parents report missing work to care for their kids with anxiety issues- half a billion dollars a year in lost productivity
- Pathstone we are serving over 7,000 children that equates to only serving 40-50% of our children/youth who are suffering from mental health in Niagara
- Suicide is the leading cause of non-accidental death for our kids
- 70% of Adults with mental health issues- stem from childhood trauma
- **Wait Times:** generally most community are waiting as long as 6 months or more.
- So many of our youth go to ER for a temporary stabilization and with no further treatment or they end up on a treatment wait list and eventually end up going back to overcrowded ER .
- When children and youth fail to get the help they need, the results are devastating- and can be fatal. Eventuality, leading to a life span of using ER, Rehab and treatment centres.

The REALITY

- Our current and former provincial governments continue to reinforce a 'knee jerk' reaction to funding crisis. For example, our Ontario Hospitals are highlighting their urgent need for immediate funding to deal with the current hallway medicine and to address their financial deficiencies they are accumulating each year.
 - a story was published on Wednesday by CBC News, which reported some of Ontario's hospitals are filled beyond capacity nearly every day.
 - Two days ago our St. Catharines Standards quoted our NDP MPP stated "We're facing a health-care crisis in Niagara"

- I do understand there is no one solution to ending overcrowding at the ER, it is a complicated and complex matter, but it's been around for decades
- I get it ... There are many causes!
- However, the provincial government can continue to throw money at this particular hospital crisis, particularly when it is unlikely we will see significant changes to the current trajectory or solve the problem of hallway medicine

PARIDIGN Mind Set Shift

- We all need clean water, and when a river is polluted, we as a community have options... we can build a water treatment facility, we can attempt to filter all the water that is flowing down stream. We can keep building infrastructures downstream at a huge cost
- However, a **root analysis** would suggest.... locate the source of where the toxins are coming ... say it is coming from industrial company that is upstream , where they have inadequate treatment for toxins and it is being dumped into the river. Common sense is to move upstream to the inflection point and correct those toxic treatment practices, go to the source and eliminate the toxins being dumped into our river
- We know that 70% of all adult mental health/addiction issues stem from childhood trauma. We also know that when you combine the treatment for depression, anxiety, substance abuse, it is the number one costs to our Niagara Health Hospitals. We also know, that mental health and addiction challenges contributes to chronic ailments such as diabetes, COPD, dementia.
- **Since this is the case...** our investment case is we need to go to the source of where the **problem is** ... we need to go to **the inflection point** as to where we can change the trajectory of our current health care challenges that is costing our government/tax payers due to high hospital costs,

operating adult MH & A treatment/rehabilitation centres, funding for our justice system costs, and medical disability payments.

- Our children's treatment centres have been chronically underfunded for over the past 15 to 20 years.
- Our children who are on our waitlist due to being ill ..will become critically ill... and the unintended consequences , they will die by overdosing or intentionally kill themselves or ultimately in the future will be using our adult treatment services and going to ER
- Children & Youth Mental Health & addiction services is the inflection point for **prevention, early identification and early intervention for Adult Mental Health & Addiction**
- We need our politicians and our current government to 'wake up' and develop an **intentional sustainable funding strategy** to ensure we move the investment needle upstream to children , youth and families.
- Help our children and youth stay healthy at the onset of mental health challenges. Change our current reactionary, knee jerk investment strategy to sustainable funding to our children and youth.
- Children Mental Health and Addictions is where new and sustainable investments will change the trajectory. Make the CEO's and Board of Directors accountable by ensuring the investment funding is going directly to hiring frontline mental health and addiction professionals

Thank you