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MEDIA RELEASE

MAZANKOWSKI REPORT — A MAJOR LEAP FORWARD

Edmonton, Alberta, January 8, 2002 —

“The report of the Premier’s Advisory Council on Health presents new hope for people with mental illnesses,” says Dennis Anderson, the Chair of an Alliance of fifteen Alberta organizations representing professional, consumer, family and citizen advocates in the field of mental health.

The Council has recommended a dramatic change that should see mental health services administered closer to the people. This will happen through integrating mental health services with the work of Regional Health Authorities. The Council sees a clear conflict of interest in the designers and operators of services also being the evaluators of the services provided.

Dennis Anderson, Chair of the Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, says that although the Mazankowki report underlines the Alliance position and other government reports spanning more than fifty years, “there are three significant differences at this time.” The first is the government’s recognition of mental disorders among “the new epidemics” and its commitment to “find more efficient and affordable ways” to address the difficulties. The second is the support of all major stakeholders in the community, including psychiatrists, family members and former patients. The third difference, said Anderson, “is the Health and Wellness Minister’s support for a reformed system.”

“The Alberta government is now spending \$505 million a year on mental health services; we look forward to major improvements with those resources,” says George Lucki, the Vice-Chair of the Alliance and a Past President of the Psychologists’ Association of Alberta. Lucki notes that “costly duplicate administrative structures, poor service coordination and patients who are continually readmitted to hospitals because of lack of adequate community supports, are very costly parts of the system.”

Alliance members will meet Thursday to determine a strategy and action required to ensure that this recommendation is acted upon on a priority basis. “For the last eighteen months, our Alliance has been pressing the government and its Alberta Mental Health Board to integrate services with Regional Health Authorities and to develop programs

Alberta Association for
Community Living

Alberta Association for
Marriage and Family Therapy

Alberta Association of
Registered Occupational
Therapists

Alberta College of Social
Workers

Alberta Committee of Citizens
with Disabilities

Alberta Mental Health
Self Help Network

Alberta Psychiatric
Association

Boyle Street Co-op

Calgary Dual Diagnosis
Committee

Canadian Mental Health
Association

Depression and Manic
Depression Association of
Alberta

Edmonton City Centre
Church Corporation

Psychologists’ Association
of Alberta

Registered Psychiatric
Nurses’ Association of
Alberta

Schizophrenia Society of
Alberta

The AAMIMH
acknowledges the ongoing
participation of the
**Premier’s Council on the
Status of Persons with
Disabilities**, recognizing its
mandate as an objective
liaison between community
and government stakeholders

based on the world's 'best practices,'" said Anderson. The government now has another opportunity to deliver on its promises with this clear recommendation from the Premier's Advisory Council on Health.

Backgrounders

- < *Mental Health Governance* — AAMIMH (enclosed)
- < *Good People . . . Good Practices . . . No System* report — AAMIMH (at AAMIMH web site, www.mentalhealthalliance.ab.ca)

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