

MEDIA RELEASE

Canadian Mental Health Association Alberta Division

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Edmonton, Alberta, October 27, 2004–

NEWLY - APPOINTED MENTAL HEALTH LEADER READY FOR THE CHALLENGE

The Fall provincial election is likely to unravel the carefully-developed, recently-announced plan to revamp the mental health system in Alberta without the “ceaseless vigilance” of advocates and champions for the system’s reform, according to **Peter Portlock**, whose appointment as Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division, has just been announced.

Portlock takes over the chief executive officer’s reins from Ron LaJeunesse on December 1. LaJeunesse, who is retiring, has served as the Association’s Executive Director in Alberta since 1982.

“We cannot allow the impending provincial election to eclipse the important and long-overdue gains made in advancing mental health on the health reform agenda,” Portlock says.

He should know.

As Director of the Secretariat for the Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, he participated throughout last winter and spring with his Alliance colleagues in the crafting of Alberta’s new provincial mental health plan, “Advancing the Mental Health Agenda”, and he doesn’t want to see that collaborative effort go to waste.

“Alberta has become a model jurisdiction where real and lasting improvement in the mental health system is finally possible,” he says, “but recent announcements in the run-up to the election call have shown that the commitment to change, trumpeted with the release of the province’s new mental health plan, is wavering.”

Portlock alludes to the Klein government's funding announcement addressing RHA deficits and the reduction of wait times – plenty of “new” money, and none of it for mental health.

An Alberta native and seasoned association executive with an extensive background in health care, Portlock is ready for the challenge. “We will accept nothing less than full speed ahead with the reform process,” he says. “Fortunately, other provinces are sufficiently interested in what is happening with mental health in Alberta to help us keep a ‘best practices’-based reform of that system on the political front burner.”

The Canadian Mental Health Association is one of Canada's oldest and largest citizens' organizations with programs of research, education, direct service and advocacy. The CMHA has offices throughout Alberta, with annual expenditures of \$11 million.

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BACKGROUNDER: Who is Peter Portlock? Bio attached.

BACKGROUNDER – MEDIA RELEASE – OCTOBER 27, 2004

PETER PORTLOCK is currently Managing Partner of The Renaissance Group, an Edmonton-based consultancy partnership. In that role he is completing two concurrent contract assignments as Director of the Secretariat for the Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, and Associate Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association (Alberta Division).

An Edmonton native and graduate of the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, Peter holds a Master's degree in Health Services Administration from the University of Alberta (1986). He has held a variety of senior positions in the Canadian Forces and more recently, in acute and long term care hospitals. Peter has served as CEO for three nationally-affiliated NGOs in Alberta. For the last ten years he has worked in arbitration and mediation, specializing in the design of conflict management processes for institutions, health facilities and not-for-profit associations. He is a qualified, practising mediator and arbitrator, and is one of four Conflict Resolution Facilitators for the United Church of Canada's Alberta Northwest Conference. He is bilingual.

Peter previously served for three years as western Canada's first hospital Patient Ombudsman. He has also held senior communications positions in health care, and was Managing Director of the University Hospitals Foundation (Edmonton). He recently co-authored a provincial "Blueprint" for the design of mental health, wellness and addictions services in the newly-integrated mental health system in Alberta.

Peter is a member of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Edmonton Community Board, and serves as a Public Representative on the Boards of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, and the Pharmacists' Association of Alberta. He was also a member of Health Canada's "Expert Advisory Committee on Xenograft Regulation." He is a past Vice Chair of the Alberta Insurance Council, Public Member on the Board of the Canadian Nurses' Association, and Edmonton representative to the Seniors' Advisory Council of Alberta.

Peter has been married to Edmonton lawyer and mediator Linda Long for 27 years. They have three adult sons and one grandson. Peter and Linda met while both were serving in the Canadian Forces, in which Peter served from 1967 - 1980, leaving in the rank of Major.

Peter has spent most of his life as a church organist and choir director, and is currently Music Director at Chalmers-Castle Downs United Church in Edmonton.