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eFACTS, a summary of current newsworthy *facts* and *effects*, is made available by the Alberta Division of the Canadian Mental Health Association to people who have a continuing interest in mental health reform in Alberta. We thought you should know:

1. The “Mazankowski” report on the Future of Health Care in Alberta has recommended the dissolution of the Alberta Mental Health Board and the transfer of its clinics and institutions to the Regional Health Authorities (RHAs). The recommendations had been predicted following the numerous presentations by the Albert Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (AAMIMH) to the Premier’s Council on the Future of Health Care (the “Maz Committee”). The report also recommends “province-wide standards, performance measures and targets,” and that community service funding be “protected and enhanced.” While the government is expected to endorse the recommendations, the Alberta Mental Health Board has issued a public statement asking the government to reconsider the recommendation. Government decisions are expected by the end of the month.
2. In an attempt to encourage the Provincial Government to act on the mental health recommendations of the Mazankowski report, member organizations of the Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health have been asked to lobby members of Cabinet and write to major newspapers. The Alliance members will also meet with Minister Mar, who has accepted an invitation to attend their January 16 meeting. CMHA has already endorsed the policy and further action will be considered at the January 19 meeting of the CMHA Board of Directors.

3. The National Board of CMHA today issued a news release in support of the “Maz” recommendations on mental health. CMHA National had apparently not passed a resolution criticizing a provincial government for more than 50 years (provincial health policy criticism is normally the mandate of CMHA’s provincial “Divisional” arms), when in March of 2000, the Board unanimously endorsed a resolution blasting the Alberta Government’s plans to rebuild institutions as “a return to the dark ages.” Today’s news release says that early action on the Maz recommendations “could reverse Alberta’s tarnished reputation in mental health reform.” See the complete release at [www.cmha.ab.ca](http://www.cmha.ab.ca) .
4. The Mazankowski report may not be all positive for people with mental illnesses. Proposals to “de-list” some services (now called “rebalance”) and to emphasize a new “P” word (personal responsibility rather than privatization), could have significant implications. If physician services are curtailed, for example, or if the proposed “personal health care accounts” (which may limit the amount of care paid for) are implemented, people with a severe and persistent (chronic) illness could be at a significant disadvantage.
5. The Federal counterpart to the Mazankowski Council, the Romanow Commission, has just announced a web site to report on progress. It can be found at [www.healthcarecommission.ca](http://www.healthcarecommission.ca) . The Commission has now received invited representations (CMHA’s can be found at [www.cmha.ca/english/healthcommission.htm](http://www.cmha.ca/english/healthcommission.htm) and will begin its public consultations shortly.
6. The Universal Studios production, *A Beautiful Mind*, is playing in cities across Canada to rave reviews. The movie, with Russell Crowe, is about Nobel Prize Laureate Robert Nash, who suffered with schizophrenia. It has been nominated for six Golden Globe awards. Some however have criticized the film, expressing concern that it conveys that people can live with schizophrenia without medication. The Schizophrenia Society of Canada and the National CMHA have issued news releases supporting the movie saying it “promotes understanding” and shows the “devastating nature” of the illness.

7. The Board of Edmonton's Muttart Foundation will be publishing CMHA Executive Director Ron LaJeunesse's work, *Political Asylums*. The potentially controversial book chronicles the history of mental health services in Alberta from the perspective of the influence of politics, personalities and power. Written as a "novel," but without fiction, the book is expected to be available within the next few months. People with any knowledge of Alberta's mental health system can expect to recognize many of the book's "characters."
8. On January 8, eFACTS reported a threat of litigation against physicians at the Alberta Hospital Edmonton by the Alberta Mental Health Board. The physicians have expressed concerns about being "muzzled," but their lawyers advise them not to deal publicly with the allegations of the Board. They will instead express public support for the Mazankowski recommendations.
9. The CBC has produced a documentary at an unnamed Alberta location, where people with mental illness are encouraged to "foresake traditional medication in favour of deliverance." It is entitled *Deliverance* and will air January 15 on CBC. Check for local air time.
10. The Alberta Mental Health Board meets again on January 18 in Edmonton. The agenda includes committee reports on priorities, a report on AISH, Mental Illness Awareness Week, forensic psychiatry and RMHAC appointments. There is no reference to the Mazankowski report.
11. The January 21 edition of the *Alberta Report* focuses on a "nutritional breakthrough" in the treatment of bipolar depression ("E.M. Power"), and the claims of its developers have been reported on previously in eFACTS. The "supplement" remains controversial (and relatively costly), but research at the University of Calgary and Harvard suggest some promise.

For more information contact the Alberta Division of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

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