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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. Planning for the new Provincial "*Mental Health Services Plan*," due for implementation in April 2004 is moving slowly. The AMHB has been heavily involved in transition and restructuring work, leaving only modest time for planning. The process however has begun, and rumours that a consultant to Health and Wellness Minister Mar would have the lead role in developing the plan are a bit misleading. AMHB Director Sandra Harrison will have the lead staff role with a Steering Committee comprised of 11, including representatives of all of the Health Authorities, the AMHB CEO, and Wayne McKendrick from Alberta Health and Wellness. For information regarding the specifics for membership, contact the Alberta Division. The Steering Committee has now met twice and have decided to contract with external consultants to facilitate the process, which has a tight time frame.
2. The Alberta Alliance on Mental Health has held recent meetings with AMHB Board representatives and the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Board indicated it was very interested in developing new and positive relationships with the Alliance and the Minister remains committed to mental health reform. Minister Mar does however, see the next nine months as developmental and not political requiring his interventions. There are at least two potential problems here. Even if the new plan is developed in draft prior to January, it will be too late to impact this year's Treasury Board budget allocations. It seems likely then that any new resources for community care (as recommended in the "*Mazankowski Report*") will not emerge until fiscal year 2005/2006. The second problem is participation. A key test of the AMHB's commitment to building relationships with the Alliance will be whether or not they respond positively to the strong urging of the AAMIMH that they be members of the Steering Committee overseeing the planning, or provide some alternate mechanism for ongoing input.
3. The Alberta Mental Health Board met on June 20. Nominations for new Board members are with the Minister and an announcement is expected shortly. An appeal panel will be set up to adjudicate RHA funding. There are no additional

dollars. The issue is one of distribution where the dollars went to one Region and the staff to another. The AMHB will be reviewing admission statistics to counter the claim by southern Alberta RHAs that Alberta Hospital Ponoka is systematically refusing to admit patients from the south. It was reported that there was a sense from the Council of Deputies that any new health dollars will use the Mazankowski Report as a template and this bodes well for mental health. The community geographic teams are in place, but funding is only secure until March 2004. The Board will be working to ensure their continuation. The David Thompson RHA has applied to the Minister for an Order in Council to name the Red Deer Regional Hospital a Designated Facility. The Order is expected in November. There are "transition challenges" in integrating Alberta Hospital Ponoka staff and programs into the RHA. Further work is needed to improve cooperation and encourage flexibility to get staff to work in facilities and community. Finally, RHAs will be moving from a Business Plan model to a "Multi-Year Performance Agreement" model. CEO Ray Block was appointed AMHB designate in negotiations with the Department of Health and Wellness.

4. The Alberta Company "True Hope" produces a nutritional supplement *EMPower Plus* that appears to be phenomenally effective for many individuals with mood disorders and in some cases, schizophrenia. While it is chemically a nutritional supplement, *True Hope* has run afoul of Health Canada for "drug like" claims. There was a small sample research program at the U of C which appeared to support the many very positive anecdotal reports which CMHA has received regarding the supplements' benefits. However, the research and availability of the nutrient is severely jeopardized at this time. CMHA is working to broker a solution through the offices of the Honourable Ann McClellan, a solution which would accelerate the research, ensure no limits on personal imports of the product from the U.S.A. and re-examine the products composition and marketing through the Company and Health Canada's "Natural Products Division." Members who have had an experience with *EMPower* are asked to write Ron LaJeunesse at 328 Capital Place, 9707 – 110 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2L9. For more information on the nutrient go to www.empowersupporters.com or www.truehope.com. The Health Canada perspective can be found at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/in in the "Warnings and Advisories" section.
5. The National CMHA "Citizens" consultation on a national mental health policy is nearing an end with all of Alberta , BC and the NT consultations now complete, along with a "Synthesis Forum" that brought delegates together from the three Provinces/Territories. A final synthesis will bring people and the survey results together from across Canada, with the results and recommendations going to Health Canada. The recommendations are likely to be far-reaching, ranging from standards and report cards, to housing and aboriginal services. For more information contact the Alberta Division of CMHA.

6. President George Bush of the United States has appointed a new 14 member "*Freedom Commission on Mental Health*" with the mandate to make recommendations to reform the U.S. mental health system. The Commission was immediately attacked for not having "consumer" representation. The Commission is expected to have a draft report by November with a final report by April 2004. The timing parallels the Alberta planning schedule and progress will be monitored carefully. This is the third President to emphasize mental health services; President John Kennedy in the 60's being the first, with the last reform initiative by President Carter in 1978. For more information go to www.mentalhealthcommission.gov .
7. The expansion of Edmonton's Capital Health Authority "*Health Link*" to other Health Authorities will provide improved primary health care telephone access to health professionals (nurses) across Alberta. Edmonton's contact is 408-LINK (or 408-5465), Calgary at 943-5465, and other parts of the province toll free at 1-866-408-5475. The Ponoka Help Line will be folded into the expanded Health Link by September. The Calgary Health Authority has also developed a supplemental number, the Mental Health Information and Options Line at 943-1500.
8. Alberta Human Resources and Employment continues to involve CMHA in their consultations around the reform of income and employment services. The Income and Employment Supports Act received assent on May 16 and consultative work began on the regulations with a full day meeting on June 26th. The new Act will attempt to design services around peoples needs, rather than try to fit people into programs. The philosophy recognizes the cyclical nature of many of the more severe mental illnesses and the need to design service flexibility and provide training and support for other than full-time work. The Act is to become law in January. The regulations are nearing completion and the Department has developed a Discussion Guide describing proposed changes. The Guide has been mounted on the web and contains a feedback form to respond electronically. See it at www.gov.ab.ca/hre/takingthenextstep/ . Note: The timeline is short and responses will only be accepted until August 2nd.
9. The Provincial Diversion Initiative continues to "perk along" with hopes for pilots in Lethbridge and St. Paul in the near future. Planning for the Edmonton project is underway and CMHA is pursuing activity designed to ensure that the Calgary pilot receives ongoing funding at the completion of it's research trials. Nationally, the Association of Police Chiefs followed the lead of Police Commissioners a year ago and endorsed the development of criminal justice diversion of persons with mental illness for implementation across Canada. Leadership was provided by the London Police Chief who has researched the problem and detailed implications for police resources. More information is available from the Alberta Division of CMHA.

10. The 2003 Annual Meeting of the Alberta Division of the CMHA will take the form of a tribute to the hundreds of volunteers who support the Associations' activities across Alberta. It is planned to be held at Edmonton's Coast Terrace Inn on Friday, October 17th. Mark your calendars and send your award nominations to the Alberta Division, CMHA. All members and prospective members are welcome. Official notices and invitations for members to run for election to the Divisional Board of Directors will be sent within 60 days of the meeting.
11. The National Annual meeting and conference will be held July 18 to 20 in Yellowknife. The conference is much smaller than usual largely due to the high cost of travel to the Territories. Also unusual is that there will be NO competitive election for National Board spots as the nominations equal the available spots. Alberta's membership on that Board include Divisional President Bob Campbell, Dennis Anderson and Bill Gaudette. It is also known that at least two Albertans will receive national recognition for their work. Information on the conference is available on the National website at www.cmha.ca.
12. The 2004 National Annual Meeting plans are already well underway and slated for July 7th - 11th, 2004 in St. John, New Brunswick. The conference will be jointly sponsored by CMHA and the Schizophrenia Society with a theme of "*Honouring Our Past - Charting Our Future*". Planning for the 2005 Conference in Edmonton is close behind, and is scheduled to be held at the Convention Centre on September 22nd - 25th, 2005. This will be a significant event honouring 100 years as a province and the 50th Anniversary of CMHA in Alberta.
13. The Fall meetings of the CMHA Alberta Divisional Board are planned for October 17th and 18th in conjunction with the AGM. Agenda items will include Executive Appointments, Audit Review, the 2003-2005 Strategic Plan, Succession planning, and a host of social policy considerations from the mental health plan to *EMPower*, to disability benefits.
14. Divisional Past President Richard Drewry has received the Edmonton Region's top recognition, the President's Award for his legal work in support of that office. Richard Drewry, QC, is with Emery Jamieson in Edmonton and has a twenty year history of providing service in the mental health field, largely on a voluntary basis.
15. Edmonton Regional Executive Director Joanne Kidd will, in early September, be leaving for a year on a Muttart Fellowship. She will be replaced by a former senior staffer with the Alberta Mental Health Board, David Maher. The Calgary appointment to replace retiring Executive Director Trish Cameron is expected to be announced in the weeks ahead.

16. Former RCMP Chief Superintendent Gord Button has been appointed Provincial Ombudsman to replace Scott Sutton, also a former RCMP officer. The appointment will coincide with a broadened mandate to investigate any complaints against professionals (psychologists, social workers) covered by Alberta's Health Professions Act. Edmonton businessman and United Church Minister Donald Hamilton has been appointed to replace former politician Bob Clark as Alberta's new Ethics Minister. Both individuals are known to senior CMHA members.

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