

The Shoreline Journal Tid-Bits

TOGETHERALL TO GET MORE FUNDING

The Province is expanding access to e-health resource Togetherall to all of Nova Scotia's post-secondary students and apprentices. Togetherall was previously available only to young people aged 16 to 29. It is a safe and anonymous online peer-to-peer community that is moderated by registered clinical practitioners, and it is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Expanding access to Togetherall adds to a suite of free online mental health resources available to post-secondary students through HealthyMindsNS. The province is providing \$10,000 for the additional access to Togetherall, in partnership with RBC (Royal Bank of Canada) Future Launch, Nova Scotia Health and the QEII Foundation.

EMERGENCY SERVICES PROVIDERS GET FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Ground search and rescue, volunteer fire departments and other emergency services provider groups will get more than \$1.14 million from the province to buy equipment that will help them save lives.

The Emergency Services Provider Fund offers money to fire departments and ground search and rescue organizations, including hazardous materials teams, to upgrade equipment that is used directly in response to a fire or emergency.

65 organizations are receiving funding under the program this fiscal year. Categories include personal protective equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus, communications, rescue equipment, miscellaneous firefighting equipment, hazardous materials equipment and emergency power for buildings. Organizations can apply every three years. The program provides up to 75 per cent of eligible costs to a maximum of \$20,000.

The following is a list of local organizations receiving funding and the amount being received:

- Milford and District Volunteer Fire Brigade Society, \$20,000;
- Oxford Volunteer Fire Department, \$19,991;
- Tatamagouche Fire Department, \$20,000;
- North River and District Fire Brigade, \$20,000;
- Bass River and District Fire Brigade, \$20,000;
- Pugwash Volunteer Fire Department, \$20,000;
- Wallace District Volunteer Fire Dept, \$20,000;
- Upper Stewiacke Volunteer Fire Department, \$15,836;
- Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Association, \$20,000 and
- Economy Fire Brigade, \$17,992.

Full list of 2021-22 Emergency Service Provider Fund grant recipients: <https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/emergency-services-provider-fund-grant-recipients-2021>

PROVINCE HIRING NURSE PRACTITIONERS

The Province is investing \$2.5 million to increase the number of nurse practitioners working in long-term care. The funding will be used to hire at least 13 new nurse practitioners who will provide much-needed support to long-term care facilities across the province. The new nurse practitioners will work with existing facility teams and family physicians to diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, prescribe medications and perform some medical procedures for long-term care residents.

They will work in multiple long-term care facilities and also serve people in the surrounding community who do not have a family doctor or access to a nurse practitioner. Adding more nurse practitioners will also relieve other pressures in the healthcare and long-term care systems, such as reducing ambulance transfers, emergency room visits and long-term care admission delays.

The Expert Advisory Panel on Long-Term Care Report is available at: <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/publications/Minister-Expert-Advisory-Panel-on-Long-Term-Care.pdf>

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OP-ED

Mental Health Day / Mental Illness

By Brian Cormer

(The following is an op-ed from Brian Cormer, Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health)

Mental illness and addictions affect thousands of Nova Scotians. The impacts and suffering are felt by thousands more - partners, children, parents, friends, caregivers and the communities we live and work in.

As a province and as a society, we need to do more - more to embrace those who suffer and more to address the many concerns surrounding mental illness and addictions. We can do this by addressing the stigma against mental illness and addictions, by looking at social needs like housing and income and how they contribute to mental health and addictions, by eliminating barriers to accessing our health-care system and by expanding access to the right services and supports needed for recovery.

The theme for this year's World Mental Health Day is Mental Health in an Unequal World. It speaks to inequitable access to mental health care, and that is something we have committed to address. Our government will ensure that all Nova Scotians, regardless of where they live or their income, will have access to mental health services. We also need to address, head-on, the added barriers and increased mental health challenges among marginalized populations including African Nova Scotians, Indigenous people, members of the 2SLGBTIQ+ community, and the need to provide culturally appropriate and gender specific supports.

We know the enormity of the tasks ahead of us to achieve these goals.

There is no single solution. The work ahead will take time and a willingness to take bold action and challenge the systems in place. It will mean taking an honest look at the social structures in place to support us and acknowledging their failures.

We cannot take a narrow view of mental health, in isolation from physical health issues or from the social determinants of health. We need to work alongside those in our education system, justice system and housing and community services network on solutions that make a positive impact on the health and well-being of Nova Scotians.

I worked on the frontline of mental health and addictions treatment and know some of the challenges that need to be addressed. There is much we can learn from our community-based grassroots organizations and from front-line mental health workers.

We have incredibly dedicated front-line mental health professionals and community workers in Nova Scotia who have devoted their lives to making life better for others. They need to be part of the bigger discussion. And I intend to seek their ideas and solutions.

Each year, World Mental Health Day and Mental Illness Awareness Week remind us of the importance of this issue and challenge us to work even harder to improve mental health services.

I think it is fair to say that these past 19-plus pandemic months have been extremely difficult for everyone. We have seen the impacts that fear, job loss and lack of social interactions have had on Nova Scotians. But we have also seen resilience, compassion and strength and that should be celebrated.

Mental illness and addictions affect us all. The well-being of our province relies on the well-being of our people.

It is time to lead the charge and be the light for those who often find themselves in darkness.

Brian Cormer, is Nova Scotia's Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health

An Update from the Mass Casualty Commissioners

October 13, 2021

This week's update includes information about the Commission's adjusted proceedings schedule and a look ahead as we plan for gathering the broad impacts of the mass casualty.

Thank you again to everyone who came out to our recent Open Houses in Debert, Truro, Millbrook, and Wentworth. We were pleased to have the opportunity to talk to more than 100 community members in-person. Your insight and feedback constantly improve our process. We posted a thank you and follow-up note and you can review the materials from the events on our website if you were unable to attend.

At the Open Houses, some of you asked when the information we have gathered about what happened during the April 18-19, 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia will be shared with the public. Today, we announced the Commission's adjusted proceedings schedule, which includes times for public proceedings in early 2022.

Our team is in the process of drafting a series of Foundational Documents. This work is complex and includes reviewing and analyzing thousands of documents and other information. As is often the case with public inquiries, disclosure of thousands of documents and materials is a time-consuming and ongoing process. In addition, witness interviews are still underway and new witnesses continue to come forward.

We are committed to providing detailed and accurate information to the public about what happened on April 18-19, 2020. For this reason, public proceedings

will now begin in late January 2022, with hearings to start in February and continue in the following months. A calendar of proceedings for fall 2021 and winter 2022 is available on the Commission website. The Commission continues to be on track to complete its interim report in May 2022 and its final report by November 2022.

This adjusted schedule will give more time for Participants involved in the first phase of the Commission's work (establishing What Happened) to review the evidence and information and provide input to the draft Foundational Documents. A list of the Foundational Documents for the Phase 1 work is available on the Commission's website. The list of foundational documents are outlined in separate story "Foundational Documents share key facts" elsewhere in this issue.

Other community members at the Open Houses asked for more information on the Commission's work and how they could share information that may help our investigation. We have added some new pages on our website to help explain key terms, and a calendar of upcoming proceedings. We are thankful that people are coming forward and as we have said, there truly is no fact too small. We are ready to listen and continue to encourage anyone with information who would like to speak with a member of our team to contact us at info@MassCasualtyCommission.ca or

call either 902-407-7532 (local) or 1 833-635-2501 to set up a time.

In the weeks and months ahead, as we continue to work to understand what happened, along with why and how, we recognize that sometimes reading or hearing about a distressing or emotionally overwhelming experience can be upsetting and disturbing. If you need support at any point during the Commission's process, the Commission's Mental Health team is here to help by:

Connecting you with mental health services and other support providers, or listening to feedback on the supports available

Sharing information on ways you can continue building resiliency

You can contact our mental health team through the Commission's main contact information and access resources anytime through the Wellness Support section on our website.

As you can see, we are using a new email template to send these updates. This will be the format going forward. We hope you enjoy the new layout and look forward to connecting with you in the future.

Submitted on behalf of The Mass Casualty Commission by Hon. J. Michael MacDonald, Chair; Leanne J. Fitch (Ret. Police Chief, M.O.M.) and Dr. Kim Stanton

Deadline for the December issue of The Shoreline Journal is Nov. 16.

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