

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

Annual Report

April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024

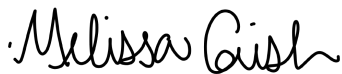
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, the 2023-24 Annual Report is presented on behalf of the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) membership, who served for the fiscal reporting period of April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024. The Advisory Council is a Category 3 government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and plans and reports under these requirements. My signature below acknowledges the Advisory Council is accountable for the results reported.

While I have just recently been appointed as the Chair, I have been advised that the past year has been productive for the Advisory Council. This year, it advised on the implementation of **Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador**, the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan: Reducing Alcohol Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador**, and other program materials that are transforming the mental health and addictions system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to all members of the Advisory Council who just finished their terms for their continued dedication to mental health, substance use and addictions issues in the province. On behalf of the Advisory Council, I also extend appreciation for the efforts of staff within the Department of Health and Community Services for their support of the Advisory Council's important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Coish". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Coish, RegPT, BScPT, MHS, CHE
Chair
Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

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Overview

The Advisory Council reports to the Minister of Health and Community Services and advises on key mental health and addictions matters to support decision-making and policy development. The Advisory Council also provides input on and supports HCS's oversight of the completion of all actions outlined in the five-year provincial action plans: **Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan: Reducing Alcohol Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador**.

The Advisory Council also provides input and advice on matters related to:

- Enhancing mental health and addressing mental illness, substance use and addiction;
- Fostering public awareness, education and anti-stigma efforts; and
- Addressing other priorities as they emerge.

The vision of the Advisory Council is that input provided by the council will affect positive change in the mental health and addictions system.

Further information about the Advisory Council is located on the Department of Health and Community Services website and can be accessed [here](#).

Membership

Council appointment recommendations are made by the Public Service Commission using a merit-based process in accordance with section 25(a) of the **Public Service Commission Act**. Members of the Advisory Council are then appointed by the Minister of Health and Community Services, and include individuals representing diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences (see Appendix A for membership list).

The Advisory Council brings diverse backgrounds, knowledge, and experience in mental health, substance use and addictions, and currently includes:

- Personal lived experience/family experience;
- Psychiatry and family medicine;
- Education;
- Health promotion and prevention; and
- Community organizations.

Member terms: Advisory Council members are appointed for a term of three years and may be re-appointed for one further term of three years, for a maximum of six years. Where the term of office expires and a successor has not been appointed, the member may continue to hold their position until a successor is appointed.

Funding

Members are not remunerated for their participation on the Advisory Council. Administrative costs associated with Advisory Council meetings are covered by the Department of Health and Community Services.

The Advisory Council does not maintain a separate office, and secretariat support is provided by the Mental Health and Addictions Division, Department of Health and Community Services.

Meeting Frequency

In 2023-24, the Advisory Council held three virtual meetings. These meetings were held on May 11, 2023; October 19, 2023; and March 14, 2024. Because meetings were held virtually, no expenses have been incurred.

Highlights and Partnerships

The Advisory Council maintains a strong partnership with the Department of Health and Community Services, the Provincial Indigenous Health Team and the Provincial Recovery Council for Mental Health and Addictions.

The highlights of 2023-24 include:

- Provided oversight on the implementation of **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan**;
- Prepared and submitted a three-year Activity Plan for 2023-26, which was posted on the House of Assembly website; and
- Updated its Terms of Reference.

Report on Performance: Objectives 2023-2026

Given the Advisory Council provides support to the Minister of Health and Community Services, the following objective guides its direction for the period April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2026, and will be reported on yearly for the duration of this period.

Issue: Provide oversight of the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan** and **Our Path of Resilience**.

The annual objective for the Advisory Council will remain the same until all actions contained in **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan** have been implemented. Simultaneously, the Advisory Council will continue to advise the Minister of Health and Community Services on key mental health and addictions matters and trends to formulate effective decision making and policy development. The indicators will change annually as work progresses on the implementation of actions and as other priorities emerge.

Annual Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Advisory Council will have provided the Minister of Health and Community Services with advice on key mental health and addictions matters to support decision-making and policy development, as well as provided input and oversight to advance work on all actions in **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan**.

Indicators:

- Provided input on all actions completed in **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Plan**;
- Obtained expert and group member expertise;
- Invited community groups and other organizations to present information;
- Attended presentations on mental health and addictions policies and programs;
- Provided advice to the Minister of Health and Community Services; and
- Made recommendations on government-led mental health and addictions initiatives.

Initiatives Measure: Provided commentary and recommendations.

Indicator	Outcome
Provided input on all actions completed in Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan	The Advisory Council provided input on the development of the Monitoring and Surveillance Framework for Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan . They also provided input on the Work Plans developed by the Working Groups under Our Path of Resilience .
Obtained expert and group member expertise	The Advisory Council continued to utilize the combined expertise of its members by providing feedback on the Monitoring and Surveillance Framework for Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan and Health Workforce Planning initiatives.
Attended presentations on mental health and addictions policies and programs	Advisory Council members attended a presentation by the Steering Committee established under Our Path of Resilience on the Work Plans developed by its working groups.
Provided advice to the Minister of Health and Community Services	Advisory Council feedback and advice was provided to the Minister on many areas related to mental health and addictions. Priority topics included: the Monitoring and Surveillance Framework for Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan ; Work Plans developed by the Working Groups under Our Path of Resilience ; Health Work Force Planning initiatives related to retention and recruitment; and Substance-Use Treatment and Access to timely care.
Made recommendations on government-led mental health and addictions initiatives	Made recommendations on government-led mental health and addictions initiatives, as part of the provincial mental health and addictions system transformation. Examples are noted above.

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

There is evidence that social isolation, unemployment, domestic violence, and disrupted grief processes, among other factors, will continue to cause a surge in mental health and addictions challenges in the weeks, months, and years ahead due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Compounding factors, such as the ongoing housing crisis, will require a continued investment in mental health and addictions coinciding with other efforts targeting the social determinants of health. The Advisory Council will continue to provide guidance and oversight to ensure the mental health and addictions system meets the needs of the population.

The Advisory Council will also continue to provide guidance on the development of person-centred, community-based mental health, substance use and addictions programs as they are implemented throughout the province. Together with multiple partners, and with leadership from the Department of Health and Community Services, it looks forward to playing a key role in this challenging and transformative work.

**Appendix A: Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council Membership 2023-24
(as of March 31, 2024)**

Name	Current Experience
Sheldon Pollett	Interim Chair, Community Service Provider
Angela Crockwell	Community Service Provider
Angie Wilmott	Schools Guidance Counsellor/Psychologist
Des Coombs	Psychologist
Dr. Greg Radu	Psychiatrist, Eastern Urban Zone, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services
Michelle Kinney	Nunatsiavut Government
George Skinner	Social Worker, Community Advocate

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