

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council

Annual Report

April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025


MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, the 2024-25 Annual Report is presented on behalf of the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) membership. The Advisory Council is a Category 3 government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and plans and reports under these requirements. My signature acknowledges the Advisory Council is accountable for the results reported.

The period since I was appointed as Chair in October 2024, has been productive for the Advisory Council. This year, the Advisory Council 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 recently finished their terms for their continued dedication to mental health, substance use and addictions issues in the province. I am very excited about the work new members of the Advisory Council have completed to date and look forward to continued collaboration for the remainder of their terms. 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, 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 the Department of Health and Community Services with its 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 to affect positive change in the provincial mental health and addictions system.

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

Membership

Council appointment recommendations are made by the Public Service Commission using a merit-based process in accordance with 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 or living 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. Appointments were made in 2024, including to the Chair and Co-Chair positions.

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 2024-25, the Advisory Council held five virtual meetings. These meetings were held:

- May 16, 2024;
- August 14, 2024;
- October 29, 2024;
- December 3, 2024; and
- February 4, 2025.

Because meetings were held virtually, no expenses were 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 2024-25 include:

- Supported the Department of Health and Community Services' oversight on the implementation of **Our Path of Resilience Action Plan** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan**;
- Prepared and tabled its Annual Report for 2023-24, which was also posted on the House of Assembly website;
- Attendance by several members at the annual INSPIRE Forum (formerly known as the Recovery Forum); and
- Presented to the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions.

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 of 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, 2025, 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 under Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plans	The Advisory Council provided input on action items under Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plans during updates on both plans provided by Mental Health and Addictions Division officials.
Obtained expert and group member expertise	The Advisory Council continued to utilize the combined expertise of its members by providing feedback on Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plans . They also provided feedback on Health Workforce Planning initiatives and the planning for the yearly INSPIRE Forum. Past Advisory Council members attended the orientation meeting to present on their experience and provide advice to new members.
Invited community groups and other organizations to present information	The Advisory Council invited officials with NL Health Services to present on the new adult Mental Health and Addictions Centre and the Strategic Health Network.

Attended presentations on mental health and addictions policies and programs	<p>Several past and current Advisory Council members attended the INSPIRE Forum, held in St. John's, November 19-20, 2024.</p> <p>There was a standing item on the agenda for the Mental Health and Addictions Division to provide an update on the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions.</p> <p>The Advisory Council also received a presentation on recruitment and retention of health care professionals in the province.</p>
Provided advice to the Minister of Health and Community Services	<p>Advisory Council feedback and advice was provided to the Minister on several areas related to mental health and addictions. Priority topics included: Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan, health work force recruitment and retention, and the agenda for the INSPIRE Forum.</p> <p>The Advisory Council presented to the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions as part of its consultation process.</p>
Made recommendations on government-led mental health and addictions initiatives	<p>The Advisory Council made recommendations on actions under Our Path of Resilience and the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan. They also made recommendations directly to the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions during their consultation process.</p>

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Appointments were made by the Minister of Health and Community Services to the Advisory Council in September and October 2024, including a new Chair and Co-Chair. Meetings have been well-attended since these appointments were made.

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 advice and oversight to ensure the mental health and addictions system meets the needs of the population.

The Advisory Council is excited about the new adult Mental Health and Addictions Centre which will officially open on April 13, 2025. The new facility is co-located on the Health Sciences Centre Campus and replaces the Waterford Hospital. The new 102-bed facility provides patient-centered, quality health care with key features, including individual inpatient rooms; shared spaces for recreation, art therapy, horticulture and more; outdoor terraces; and updated spaces for counselling and therapy.

The Advisory Council looks forward to the opportunity to support recommendations stemming from the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions. This Committee was established in 2023 in response to the continued need for promotion, prevention, early intervention, treatment and support for people living with mental health, substance use and addictions issues.

The Advisory Council will also continue to provide guidance on the development of person-centered, 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, the Advisory Council will play a key role in this challenging and transformative work.

**Appendix A: Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council Membership 2024-25
(as of March 31, 2025).**

Name	Current Experience
Melissa Coish	Chair, NL Health Services
Tina Davies	Co-Chair, Richard's Legacy Foundation
Lynn Hiscock	Eastern School District
Dr. Jason Chaulk	NL Health Services
Shelly Collins	Canadian Red Cross
Brad Glynn	Lifewise
Barry Hewitt	NL Health Services
Jeffrey Hillyard	NL Housing and Homelessness Network
Donovan Taplin	University of Toronto
Kara Whalen	Service Canada
Karen Beresford	Exploits Valley Community Coalition
Lorelei Kelly	NL Health Services
Leah Loder	NL Health Services
Linda Davidge	Department of Justice and Public Safety

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council
Secretariat Support and General Inquiries: Mental Health and Addictions Division
Department of Health and Community Services
P.O. Box 8700, 1st Floor, West Block
Confederation Building, St. John's, NL A1B 4J6
Email: dbarrett@gov.nl.ca