

New Canadian Postage Stamp Supports **Those With Mental Illness**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 4, 2008

A new Canada Post PERMANENT™ stamp, helping to support the one in five (nearly 6 million) Canadians who suffer from mental illness, was issued by Canada Post in early October.

One dollar from each booklet of stamps sold will go toward the corporation's one million dollar fundraising goal for the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health.

"This stamp advocates change, much needed change," said Moya Greene, President and CEO of Canada Post. "Change starts by raising awareness and it does its most good when it impacts lives. The funds raised will help patients, their families and the people they turn to for support. It's a big job for a little stamp, but I'm confident that with the public's support and our 62,000 Canada Post employees acting as ambassadors, we'll succeed with this ambitious mission," Ms. Greene said.

In 2007, Canada Post became the first large Canadian company to adopt mental health as its cause of choice. The Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health will support front-line organizations serving patients, consumers and caregivers and help in eliminating the stigma of mental illness. Distribution of funds is expected to begin in mid-2009.

Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) of Renfrew County, a service provided by the Pembroke Regional Hospital, applauds the Canada Post initiative.

"The statistics alone are testament to the huge impact of mental illness but say nothing about the devastating impact caused by the stigma of living with mental illness in our society," said Bernadette Wren, CMCH Director.

"Stigma is an attitude based on myths, fear, societal attitudes and misinformation. Stigma results in people showing prejudice and discrimination towards people living with mental illness. The new Canada Post initiative seeks to combat stigma by raising community awareness," Ms. Wren said.

One example of how CMHS continues to raise awareness in Renfrew County is the Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI) program. The program is a partnership between CMHS, the Center for Addiction and Mental Health, the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario and the United Way / Centraide of the Upper Ottawa Valley.

Grade 11 & 12 students are given an opportunity to learn about Mental Illness through classroom presentations made by people living with mental illness

and healthcare professionals. Myths and stigmatizing attitudes about mental illness are effectively addressed and the results are very encouraging.

The following comment from one student is representative of hundreds received on evaluation forms. *“I really enjoyed the speakers living with mental illnesses. They were very outgoing and helped me understand more about what it is like to have a mental illness. I definitely will not stigmatize these individuals and will correct myself when I make a comment that could be stigmatizing.”* (In 2007 – 2008, 12 presentations were made in eight Renfrew County High Schools to approximately 300 students.)

Community Mental Health Services of Renfrew County has sites in Arnprior, Renfrew, Pembroke and Barry’s Bay servicing the entire County. Information can be sought or services accessed made by calling 1-800-991-7711. Individuals, families or concerned friends can call the Mental Health Crisis Line for support at 1-866-996-0991 a toll-free, bilingual access available 24 hours/7 days a week.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Carolyn Levesque, Public Affairs and Communications Coordinator
Pembroke Regional Hospital
(613) 732-3675, ext. 6165 / carolyn.levesque@pemreghos.org

CONTACT FOR CANADA POST

Media Relations – 613-734-8888 / nicole.lemire@canadapost.ca

Quick Facts about Mental Illness in Canada:

- About 4000 Canadians commit suicide each year and it is the most common cause of death for people aged 15 – 24. Mental illness is a factor in most suicides.
- The downsizing of institutional care was not matched with complementary upsizing of community-based services, resulting in significant gaps of service for those with severe illness and for people with moderate degrees of impairment.
- A Canadian study found that two-thirds of homeless people using urban shelters suffered from some form of mental illness
- Of the 10 leading causes of disability worldwide, five are mental health disorders: major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, substance abuse disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- Less than 4% of medical research funding goes to mental illness research
- A report published by Health Canada estimated the amount the economy lost due to mental illness in 1998 was \$14.4 billion.
- The Economic Roundtable on Mental Health estimates that the economic costs of mental illness (impact on business productivity) are equivalent to 14% of corporate Canada’s net operating profits. (Source: www.miaaw.ca)