

## Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

### Pre-budget consultations 2012

## Mood Disorders Society of Canada

### Responses

#### 1. Economic Recovery and Growth

*Given the current climate of federal and global fiscal restraint, what specific federal measures do you feel are needed for a sustained economic recovery and enhanced economic growth in Canada?*

The Government of Canada has done an excellent job of implementing a multi-year action plan that has helped our country through the economic difficulties of the past several years much more successfully than other jurisdictions. Initiatives across sectors such as natural resources, transport and health have ensured a balanced approach that will allow our economy to grow and thrive for many years to come. In particular, the Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) and the Canadian scientific community would like to thank the government for its important investment in the establishment of a pan-Canadian Depression Research and Intervention Network in last year's budget. These funds will help position our country as a leader in depression research and keep us on the leading edge of discoveries and treatment. In a time when our country's future heavily depends on a knowledge-driven economy and our ability to innovate, this type of investment demonstrates that our government places a high priority on the mental health and well-being of our workforce and community, and is serious and willing to invest the money necessary to bring Canada's research, innovation and intervention to the next level. This investment will allow for the creation and sharing of critical research information across the country and will help to address the serious impact of depression on families and the workforce. By funding this network, the government has allowed us to develop a critical mass of Canadian depression research talent that will greatly increase the ability and speed by which Canadian scientists and researchers, the Mental Health Commission of Canada and MDSC will be able to translate clinical research into world leading treatments and interventions to Canadians suffering from depression regardless of where they reside in Canada.

#### 2. Job Creation

*As Canadian companies face pressures resulting from such factors as uncertainty about the U.S. economic recovery, a sovereign debt crisis in Europe, and competition from a number of developed and developing countries, what specific federal actions do you believe should be taken to promote job creation in Canada, including that which occurs as a result of enhanced internal and international trade?*

In our knowledge-based economy it is important to ensure that job creation focuses on the all-important areas of research and innovation. The Canadian Depression Research and Intervention Network (CDRIN) responds effectively to this need and will help aid growth in this critical sector. As CDRIN develops, there will be a significant increase in all aspects of depression research and intervention as well as specific research into PTSD and suicide. This increase will lead to the capacity building and deployment of more skilled researchers, clinicians, support staff and greater community organization participation throughout Canada. Scientific investigation will expand and position the country as a leader in depression research and intervention. This will also significantly impact the issue of long-term disability in the workforce, where depression is of significant concern as the predominant factor leading to short and long-term disability leave costs to employers. Interventions and preventive strategies derived from research will have a major impact on workplace productivity and will result in well over 100 jobs for skilled health care and researchers and service providers, not to mention the

increased capacity building through engagement of scores of young students and trainees.

### **3. Demographic Change**

*What specific federal measures do you think should be implemented to help the country address the consequences of, and challenges associated with, the aging of the Canadian population and of skills shortages?*

Canada will be facing some significant challenges in the coming years as the country's population ages and we see fewer younger faces in the workforce. One of the important policies that the government has been looking towards in anticipation of these changes is allowing people to work beyond the traditional age of retirement should they choose to. This type of policy makes eminent sense given the longer lifespans of Canadians even compared to just a generation ago, and allows for greater stability of workforce numbers without having to completely rely on outside sources. However, one of the major challenges faced by our senior population is the onset of dementia, depression and other mental illnesses. Depression often precedes dementia, and is considered a major risk factor for the latter. Although we as a country can promote and encourage staying in the workforce longer, the issue becomes moot if those over the age of 65 are unable to work due to mental health issues. The research undertaken by the members of CDRIN will give Canadians a better understanding of dementia and depression, their early indicators and will no doubt lead to better interventions that can be undertaken earlier with patients showing the signs of dementia. These patients will have a higher quality of life as well as the opportunity to remain active and in the workforce. This is why the work that is being undertaken by CDRIN is critical for Canada as we move forward. The ability to address mental health problems in a more individualized and efficient fashion will help ensure that Canadians across the country will have the ability to be working, productive members of society for a longer period of time.

### **4. Productivity**

*With labour market challenges arising in part as a result of the aging of Canada's population and an ongoing focus on the actions needed for competitiveness, what specific federal initiatives are needed in order to increase productivity in Canada?*

As we continue to work with government on the establishment of the Canadian Depression Research and Intervention Network, it is important to acknowledge not only the jobs that will be created by this new body, but also the positive effect that the network's research will have on the Canadian workforce. Depression costs the Canadian economy an estimated \$51 billion annually in costs related to health care, criminal justice, child abuse and neglect, addictions, institutional stresses and dysfunction, lost income and lost productivity. In fact, on any given week at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental illness, including approximately 355,000 disability cases due to mental and or behavioural disorders, plus approximately 175,000 full-time workers absent from work due to mental health issues. Furthermore, depression represents the number one cause of work place disability in Canada. These numbers are staggering and represent a serious threat to the health and productivity of our workforce at a time when we can ill-afford it. With the world economic situation still not stabilized, it is more important than ever that our country continue to outperform others, and a major part of that means having access to strong and productive workers, all across the country. The reality remains that the current diagnosis protocol for patients suffering from depression is generalized and not biologically based, resulting in treatments that are only fully effective for about 30 percent of patients. The Network will work in conjunction with patients, NGOs, clinicians, clinical researchers and primary care providers to ensure that patients going through the diagnosis process will have access to new diagnostic tools, leading to more effective treatments. The treatments developed by CDRIN researchers will help address many of the disabling mental health issues that these Canadians are

suffering from today and help establish more fulsome participation in our economy by all.

## **5. Other Challenges**

*With some Canadian individuals, businesses and communities facing particular challenges at this time, in your view, who is facing the most challenges, what are the challenges that are being faced and what specific federal actions are needed to address these challenges?*

As previously noted, mental health issues have a significant impact on the Canadian economy. That being said, these issues are diverse and wide-ranging. To be able to address them in any sort of cohesive fashion, it is imperative that we focus on those areas that are particularly challenging and far-reaching. Currently, there are two specific areas that fit this criteria and those are post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide. Although often associated with soldiers coming home from combat, PTSD can affect anyone who has suffered a particularly traumatic event, such as rape or an auto accident. Thousands of Canadians who are suffering from this illness each year fight their battles alone due to lack of knowledge and the overwhelming stigma associated with diagnosis. In addition to research and treatments to be developed by CDRIN, we will also be developing strong and far-reaching educational opportunities for both professionals and the public. This is why the Continuing Medical Education program for physicians that was approved in last year's budget will play an important role in helping patients with PTSD. CDRIN will also be focusing attention on the issue of suicide. Currently there is a lack of strong methodological research in this area as well as a lack of research connectivity. In collaboration with the MHCC, the Network will play an important role in bridging this gap and bringing together leading minds on the topic. By focusing on this particular area the Network will be able to reach a host of at-risk communities, particularly youth and First Nations. MDSC, MHCC and CDRIN are proud to be working with the government to help bring Canada to the forefront of depression research and treatments. The work that we will be undertaken over the coming months and years will establish our country as a leading edge contributor to the fight against this illness and help improve the lives of patients and families across the country. This Network will clearly demonstrate that by working collaboratively, the whole is truly greater than the sum of its parts.