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# Mood Disorders Society of Canada

# La Société pour les troubles de l’humeur du Canada

## The Mood Disorders Society of Canada Submission To the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons With Disabilities Regarding Bill C-81, the Accessible Canada Act

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) is a national registered charitable mental health organization. MDSC represents the interests of consumers/patients/persons with lived experience and families/caregivers dealing with depression, bipolar illness, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other related mood disorders.

Since partnering with the Public Health Agency of Canada to produce Canada’s first report on mental illness in 2002 and “The Human Face of Mental Illness” in 2006, MDSC has been at the forefront of many successful national programs to change the way mental health issues are dealt with in society and treated in the healthcare system. For example:

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- Development and deployment of leading educational materials and training programs aimed at improving the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses including PTSD.

- Member of StatsCan and CIHI expert panels; advised VAC, CPP-D and HRSD-ODI

- Supporting the development of family healthcare teams as part of the Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative, now called “Shared Care”.

- Developed a mental health training program for front line staff of the Correctional Services of Canada (CSC).

- Together with the Canadian Bar Association and Bell Let’s Talk developed a Continuing Education Legal Program on Mental Health and Wellness in the Legal

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Profession. Canada’s lawyers, judges and law students benefit from this program.

- Creating and deploying the highly regarded anti-stigma campaign “Elephant in the Room,” aimed at reducing the stigma of mental health through public education and by stimulating an informed national conversation about mental illness. Now used by many hundreds of organizations, government departments and school boards/colleges and universities.

- Created accredited Continuing Medical and Continuing Nursing Educational Programs focused on reducing the stigma of mental illness within Canada’s physician and nursing communities.

- Participation as one of the national partners in support of Bell Canada’s “Let’s Talk” campaign also aimed at breaking down the stigma of mental health;

- The only national mental health patient organization actively involved in the development and establishment of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the first NGO member of the Advisory Board for the Institute of Neuroscience, Mental Health and Addiction.

- MDSC developed the Pan-Canadian Defeat Depression campaign in 2012. More than 95 communities across the country hold annual events and tens of thousands of Canadians participate to support local mental health services. This program continues to grow.

- In September of 2016, MDSC launched its Transitions to Communities Project, a program aimed to provide training and supports to disadvantaged veterans. The $3mm funding for this program is provided by ESDC.

- MDSC continues, in partnership with the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta, to develop the APEC Digital Hub at UBC that will provide a focal point for mental health information, dialogue and research that is aimed at improving the mental health of APEC’s 2.8 billion people.

END LIST.

### Incidence and Burden of Disabling Mental Illnesses

It is now well known that mental illnesses including depression are the number one cause of disability in Canada. The cost to the Canadian economy as a result of disabling mental illnesses is in excess of $51 billion annually. Persons living with disabling mental illnesses confront not only the disability that they must deal with but also the very significant societal stigma that they must bear by virtue of their mental

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illness. Many, due to mental illness, have been unable to enter the workforce, are in and out of the workforce due to episodic or persistent illness, or wish to return to work after a lengthy period away from work. Yet research shows that individuals living with a disability, (including those living with a mental illness), are as qualified, reliable, loyal, and productive as their colleagues who do not have a disability. MDSC strives to support Canadian workplaces by developing an extensive [Workplace Mental Health](https://mdsc.ca/workplace/) program and resources to support the needs of Canadian Employers and Employees create inclusive workplaces and maintain wellness.

MDSC strongly supports the goal of Bill C-81 “to enhance the full and equal participation of all persons, especially persons with disabilities, in society”. However, history tells us that without specific reference to disabling mental illnesses, physical disabilities receive almost all of the attention of legislators when dealing with accessibility issues notwithstanding the well-known incidence and burden of disabling mental illnesses in Canada noted above.

### Proposed Amendment to Bill C-81

As a member of the Neurological Health Charities of Canada (NHCC), MDSC fully supports the content of the NHCC Brief submitted to this Committee, including the NHCC’s suggestions for the improvement of Bill C-81. However, MDSC believes that more must be said regarding the significant and unique aspects of disabling mental illnesses and therefore **it is with the greatest respect, that MDSC recommends that this Honourable Committee propose an amendment to Bill C-81 that would have specific reference to the unique nature of disabling mental illnesses, the stigma that confronts those living with disabling mental illnesses and the lack of the identification of appropriate accommodations that should be made available for persons living with disabling mental illnesses**. This, if provided, would allow those living with a disabling mental illness to engage in productive and useful work which in and of itself would benefit the individual, his or her family, and the Canadian economy in general.

While accommodations such as wheelchair ramps, curb cuts, braille elevator buttons, crossing signals for the hearing impaired are among some of the accommodations

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specified by various legislation and regulations throughout Canada, accommodations for persons living with disabling mental illnesses are seldom, if ever, required.

We would be happy to provide any additional information this Honorable Committee requires.

Respectfully submitted,

On October 24, 2018

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