

Valuable Lessons in How to Transform a Mental Health System

As the Chair of the Senate Committee which published Canada's first national report on mental health, and as the Founding Chair of both the Mental Health Commission of Canada and Partners for Mental Health, I am very pleased to have been asked to be the guest editor of this special issue of *Healthcare Quarterly*. This special issue is designed to help organizations and individuals who are involved in transforming a mental health system.

Readers are encouraged to pay particular attention to the Lessons Learned section in the various papers; they provide valuable insights into how to be successful in system reform.

The papers stress the critical importance of detailed planning and strong partnerships. They also illustrate the extraordinary amount of patience, determination and, above all, time required. The resistance to change among those currently working in the mental health system is truly incredible. Unfortunately the people who suffer as a result are people living with a mental illness.

This volume is also valuable for its papers on three issues which are extremely important, yet often overlooked, in mental health system reform. These issues are:

- Peer support
- Social enterprise in which the employees are people living with a mental illness
- Early intervention, particularly for children and youth.

All three of these issues should be a part of any mental health system transformation.

All the organizations and individuals involved in the transformation of the mental health system throughout south western Ontario, and in the London Middlesex area in particular, are to be congratulated for what they have achieved.

Now if only the pace of change could be accelerated elsewhere!

Michael Kirby, OC

