



Advocates Call on Federal Government to Create National Standards of Care for Perinatal Mental Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE– (Ottawa, ON) - The Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative (CPMHC) is calling on the federal government to establish national standards of care for perinatal mental health as 40 awareness walks take place across Canada during World Maternal Mental Health Week (May 1-7th, 2023). May 3rd is World Maternal Mental Health Day.

Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett will be speaking at the opening of the second annual Flora's Walk for Perinatal Mental Health at 9 am on May 3rd in Room 228 at the Valour Building, 151 Sparks St., Ottawa. The walk will begin at 10 am and follow a route to Parliament Hill.

“As we approach World Maternal Mental Health Day and Flora's Walk, let us honour the memory of Flora Babakhani and all those who tragically lost their lives to postpartum mental illness,” says Minister Bennett. “I am grateful to the CPMHC for organizing this important event, and for their tireless dedication to raising awareness for perinatal mental illness to ensure that what happened to Flora, never happens again.”

The walk is named after Canadian mom, Flora Babakhani who died by suicide in 2022 due to undetected postpartum psychosis. Also speaking at Flora's Walk in Ottawa will be MP Pam Damoff, MP Todd Doherty, MP Heather McPherson, and MP Don Davies.

“While we have made great strides in awareness about mental health, we still have work to do when it comes to perinatal mental health,” says MP Damoff. “Many people have heard of postpartum depression, but very few know much about postpartum psychosis. Events like Flora's Walk help raise awareness and ensure that postpartum psychosis is identified quickly and treated seriously.”

At a rate 1-2 in 1000 and rising, postpartum psychosis is the most severe form of perinatal mental illness.

“If Flora had been properly assessed and treated, it's highly possible she would still be with us today,” says Patricia Tomasi, CPMHC Co-Executive Director.

The rate of perinatal mental illness has risen from 1 in 5 pre-pandemic to 1 in 3 and rates are higher for Black, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

“Canadians need timely access to treatment now more than ever,” says Jaime Charlebois, CPMHC Co-Executive Director.

The CPMHC's mission is to improve and advance perinatal mental health care in Canada. The organization is hoping to raise \$150,000.

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