



**Canadian Mental  
Health Association**  
*Mental health for all*

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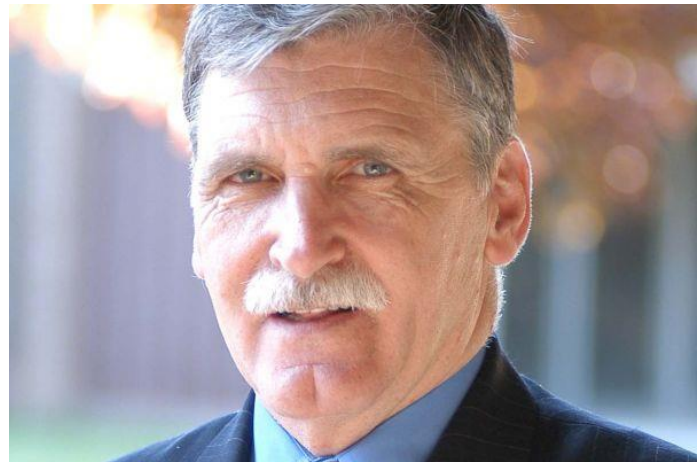
## NEWS RELEASE

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# Stories from the Front Lines; Solutions from the Survivors

## ***National conference opens a discussion on what needs to change to protect the psychological health of front line workers***

**British Columbia** — It has been 12 years since the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) held its first Bottom Line Conference on workplace mental health. Twelve years ago, CMHA struggled to get 60 people in a room to talk about work-related anxiety and depression. Today, things have changed. Next Tuesday's sold-out conference has drawn hundreds, and people willing to tell their stories have been easier to find. It's a tribute to CMHA's fight against discrimination that many are willing to come forward. What's devastating is the number of people who are still struggling to get the help they need.



*Lt-Gen. Romeo Dallaire will address the mental health of front line workers at the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Bottom Line Conference, Tuesday, Feb. 24 at the Vancouver Convention Centre.*

Workplace stress is particularly hard on first responders, those men and women we count on to protect ourselves and our families. Between 2004 and 2014, 160 soldiers died by suicide. Last year, in a six month period, over 24 first responders took their own lives. It seems every month we are looking at headlines about a police officer who has died by suicide.

It's hard to measure progress when we are faced with such carnage. What was once called shell shock is now known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It's a recognized mental disorder and something first responder workplaces struggle with. In fact, PTSD has reared its head in more workplaces than one might expect. This, the 12<sup>th</sup> Bottom Line Conference features individuals from a variety of first responder communities including: paramedics, police, corrections, health care, Canadian Forces. But there are many more. Front line workers from the social service sector, labour representatives and government are all struggling with mounting stressors at work and challenging direct service.

Many from these workplaces will gather on February 24 to talk about the storm of mental illness in the workplace and what needs to change to protect the psychological health of front line workers. Delegates will experience the coming together of different worlds, all with a common purpose: to address the unique hazards of front line jobs.

Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire is our keynote speaker. He will share his experiences on the front line in Rwanda, and his thoughts on what needs to change if Canada is going to make headway on this crucial health issue.

**About the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division**

Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division (CMHA) is part of one of Canada's most established national mental health charities. Our vision is mentally healthy people in a healthy society. As the nationwide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA helps people access the community resources they need to build resilience and support recovery from mental illness or addiction. We do this by building capacity, influencing policy, providing services and developing resources. Each year, CMHA BC together with a network of 17 BC branches provides services and supports to over 140,000 British Columbians. Together we promote mental health for all and support the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness or addiction. To learn more visit [www.cmha.bc.ca](http://www.cmha.bc.ca).

***For more information and interviews:***

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