

On July 14, 2022, a press conference was held in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. The purpose of the press conference was to discuss the opening of a new mental health and addiction center, and a new treatment philosophy. Below are excerpts of the press conference. The entire conference is on YouTube if you use the search term: Alliance Health Press Conference Moose Jaw.

Dr. Mark Lemstra, CEO, Alliance Health

I want to say welcome and thank you to the Moose Jaw Lake Centre Member of Parliament, the Honourable Mr. Fraser Tolmie. Welcome to the Moose Jaw Wakamow Member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Greg Lawrence. Welcome to the Moose Jaw Mayor, His Worship Mr. Clive Tolley. Welcome to the Moose Jaw Chief of Police Mr. Rick Bourassa. We have one person who can't make it today - Dr. Brad Thorpe (Saskatchewan Health Authority). He is doing important work at the hospital. Welcome to the Branch Manager of the John Howard Society, Mrs. Jody Oakes. Welcome to the Program Coordinator of Families for Change, Mr. Mike Bachiu, and welcome to the Director of the Moose Jaw Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Mr. David Coulombe.

The Honourable Mr. Fraser Tolmie, Moose Jaw Lake Centre Member of Parliament

Thank you Dr. Lemstra for your touching story...

Addiction is an illness that impacts millions of Canadians and their loved ones every day and has impacted people I love as well. Dr. Lemstra, what you were saying about embarrassment and shame, that can be an obstacle for people to come over; and sometimes with embarrassment and shame, people try and hide that and they're embarrassed - they don't want to share that...

We can, and we must, do more to support those battling with addiction, and their loved ones, before it's too late. Every human life has value and everybody deserves redemption...

This facility will not eliminate addictions in this community by itself, but it is an important step in the right direction. We need to do what we can to make sure that when somebody who is struggling is ready to get help, that the resources are available for them to do so. That means new beds and new facilities like this one. And I would like to go off script again here, Dr. Lemstra. We live in an industrialized society where everything is cookie-cutter, so to hear what your approach is very refreshing because we are all individuals and we all have different needs, so to be able to address those individual needs it takes time, it takes effort and it takes patience, and I believe that is what you're going to be providing for people who are in need. So, with that, I don't need to read anymore, I just need to say that I'm very proud to be here. I'm very proud to be part of this, and I look forward to being able to partner with you and be able to help people that are really in need. Thanks very much. God Bless.

Mr. Greg Lawrence, Moose Jaw Wakamow Member of the Legislative Assembly, Government of Saskatchewan

It is a good day today and it is my honour to bring greetings today on behalf of Premier Scott Moe, and Everett Hindley, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and your Government of Saskatchewan. Let me begin by recognizing the work that you do at Alliance Health and the vital role you play as one of the members of Saskatchewan's healthcare team. For many years you have delivered high quality care to the people of this province, and I have used some of your services before with some of the programs that are out of the box. With multidisciplinary medical clinics here in Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon and

Yorkton, and by opening this new in-patient centre here in our city, you have expanded mental health and addiction services, providing a place where people will feel cared for, supported, and equipped to build a better future...

To the Board and executive and staff of Alliance Health, I truly commend you on your dedication to people living with mental health and addictions challenges and helping to reduce the stigmas around these conditions. And it is a health condition. It's not a choice, it's a health condition. Not only has Alliance Health identified a need in the community, but they have taken the initiative and action for the betterment of our residents and their families. And again, I want to thank you for the opportunity to join you today and hope the best, and let's do some good things.

His Worship Mr. Clive Tolley, Mayor of City of Moose Jaw

Well thank you Mark...

I have just recently met Dr. Lemstra and he told me a number of things about his family struggles, and it made a significant impact on me. When he suggested that he was going to open a facility here, I was very, very excited. I kind of got all worked up about the fact that we are going to be able to help people...

I think I want to talk about five reasons for wanting this facility here in the City of Moose Jaw, but by and large it's about helping people, and that is obviously the first and foremost reason...

I can't think of a more beautiful setting than the Wakamow Valley. Our First Nations people and Metis people came here many, many years ago for rest and relaxation, to refill their food stores and get rested. They used to come here because there was water, there was wood and there was game. And now we're looking at this beautiful facility and the gentlemen from Boh's have brought over a canoe, kayak and bike, and the people that are going to be getting the treatment here at this facility are going to be able to make use of these kinds of tools as they get healthy and get better. When you look around this valley, it's a calming, healthful type of environment, and so I can't think this could be located anywhere better than it currently is. So, it's another investment in Moose Jaw for growing Moose Jaw. I'm excited by that, but I'm most excited about what it's going to do for the people...

Thank you very much.

Mr. Rick Bourassa, Chief of Police for Moose Jaw

Thank you Mark, and not only for the opportunity to be here today, but for the conversations we have had for years around these sorts of issues. I really appreciate it and I appreciate your innovation and your commitment to making lives better...

Mark, I thank you for bringing this new level of care, level of support, to people who are in the greatest need. I think it's going to be wonderful, it's a great addition to our community here, and all the best in the future. Anytime you need anything, let me know. Thanks very much...

Mrs. Jody Oakes, Branch Manager, John Howard Society

I'm very excited to stand here in this new treatment facility in our community. I work for the John Howard Society. I am the Manager for Justice for all of our programming in Moose Jaw...

So, we work with people at the John Howard Society, with anybody who faces barriers each day, we work to support them. We advocate for them, we try to give them a sense of hope. So, standing here today, I think of the overdoses that I see in our community and I just want to share a couple of stories today... I think of an individual a couple of weeks ago who I had to Narcan. They were overdosing. They came to me, they managed to get to our office. They were embarrassed. I remember them saying to me, "Jody I'm so embarrassed, but thank you for saving my life." I could save their life in that moment. I could bring them back from their overdose, but it's going to be a place like this that's going to be able to save their life for a long time. It's this that is going to be able to help somebody and to be able to make those connections, and to be able to know that they do have hope. Having staff that will give them hope, having that sense of individual care, which is what so many people miss, is that individual opportunity to have that individual care...

Mr. Mike Bachiu, Program Coordinator, Families for Change

Hi everyone. For those that don't know, I'm with Moose Jaw Families for Change. Our agency provides support for people with developmental barriers through our residential community activity and employment programs in Moose Jaw here. So, the opportunity to provide meal service and the cleaning service to Alliance recipients will provide more meaningful employment opportunities for those living with disabilities by learning real world practical skills in an environment that lets them give back in a meaningful way to the community. This kitchen will be supporting local when buying produce, whenever possible, helping to build our local community. Alliance bringing this extraordinary service to Moose Jaw will have a tremendous positive impact on all of the lives that it touches. We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to work with Patti, Mark, and the rest of the Alliance Health team, and look forward to being part of the wonderful work that you do. Thank you.

Mr. David Coulombe, Director of Moose Jaw Branch, Canadian Mental Health Association

Mark, thank you for having us here to celebrate with you this important moment, ladies and gentleman...

On behalf of the Canadian Mental Health Association of Moose Jaw and CMHA Division, and all of CMHA branches in Saskatchewan, I would like to congratulate and thank Alliance Health for the initiative to bring into our community this very much needed new inpatient residential mental health and addictions centre. Thank you. We're grateful at CMHA that again, one of our partners in health and mental health services shows vision and readiness to deploy time, energy and resources to contribute to our efforts of making Moose Jaw a better place to live in. Mark, you were talking about personal experience, and I'm pretty sure many of us will appreciate that when we are working in this particular field, often enough that was the initial call, and we are certainly very sympathetic to the stories you have to share with us and thank you for doing so...

Finally, as you may appreciate, a long journey awaits fellow citizens that will come to this facility. An important element of their success is the support and help that will be offered to them through the various integrated services accessible in their community. I am very enthusiastic again about our

conversation we have had thus far, and we look forward to collaborating with the entire team here at Alliance. There is hope for communities like ours in respect to mental health and addiction issues, and that hope rests on all community partners doing their part...

So again, congratulations to Alliance Health and all of our partners. Thank you for the work that you do.