

TO: Camille Quenneville, CMHA Ontario

FROM: Lesli Martin

DATE: August 7

RE: **COVID-19 Survey Results Wave 2– Topline Summary**

METHODOLOGY

This memorandum provides an overview of the key findings from the Second Wave of CMHA COVID-19 Ontario Survey. This study was conducted with an online sample of 1,002 adult residents of Ontario and was conducted between July 31st and August 4th, 2020. Results from a probability sample of this size could be considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Results have been weighted based on age, gender and region to be representative of the Ontario population. Results of this study are being compared to the first wave of the CMHA COVID-19 Ontario Survey, where applicable. The first wave of this study took place in April 2020.

KEY FINDINGS

Since April, Ontarians have seen little change in their physical or mental health, still feeling somewhat positive about both. That said, levels of stress and anxiety continue to be high (more so than depression). A plurality continues to feel their mental, and to a lesser degree, physical health has declined since the COVID-19 outbreak and are more likely to say these conditions have worsen rather than improved. Despite the high stress and anxiety levels and the impact on their mental health, Ontarians continue to be more concerned with their physical rather than their mental health.

- Since our first wave of study, Ontarians have seen little difference in their level of health; continuing to be least somewhat positive, with a strong majority rating their mental and physical health positively (Mental Health: 48% top two box score -3% since April, Physical Health: 41% top two box score +1% since April). This means that more than one-in-ten Ontarians continue to rate their mental (15% +2) and physical (16% +3) health to be poor.

- Again, like the April findings, one-third of Ontarians feel their mental health (35% -1) and one-quarter their physical health (27% +1) has declined since the COVID-19 outbreak. But their focus continues to be on their physical health, with 59% being concerned about their physical health (-3), while 46% are concerned with their mental health (same as April's findings). That said, when asking Canadians whether their physical health has improved or worsen since the outbreak, they are more likely to say it has worsened (39%) rather than improved (25%). They feel the same about the physical health of their family, both in their household (35% worsened, 21% improved) and those outside their household (33% worsened, 17% improved).
- Levels of stress and anxiety continue to be most prominently affecting mental health in Ontario, with one-third continuing to rate both their stress (30% -3) and anxiety (30% -1) high. While levels of stress are unchanged since April, with 45% saying their stress is moderate and 25% (+3) saying it is low, those who feel their anxiety is not high are feeling somewhat more positively about it, with 33% saying it is low (+6) and 37% saying it is moderate (-6). Depression continues to be less of a problem with 14% saying they are depressed at least very often (+1), while 13% are often (-3) and 32% are sometimes (-2).

The majority of Ontarians continue to feel the COVID outbreak has had an impact on their lives, however these numbers are down since the April test. This decline can be seen across several factors including impact on their personal lives, the lives of their families and the mental health of themselves, those close to them and Canadians as a whole. Despite this, the level of concern over the long-term impact this will have on both the older and younger generations has not changed since April.

- While the vast majority of Ontarians continue to feel the COVID-19 outbreak has had an impact on their lives, as the province moves in Stage 3, this impact is waning somewhat. Almost four-fifths (79%) feel they have been impacted, with 30% saying there has been a strong impact. This is down from 84% who felt impacted and 41% who felt it was a strong impact in April. Likewise, while there is still concern regarding the impact it is having on their family, this concern has lessened, with 73% saying they are worried (down from 79%) and 19% very worried (down from 29%). Not surprisingly, 46% of Ontarians feel the impact of COVID is less now than it was in March, while 29% saying there is more impact now and 29% feeling it hasn't changed.
- While Ontarians continue to feel this outbreak will have negative impacts on the mental health of themselves, those close to them and Canadians as a whole, they feel somewhat less strongly about this impact. Seven-in-ten (71%) believe it will have a negative impact on the mental health of Canadians (down 5 points since April), while 54% feel will have a negative impact on extended family (down 5%), 48% on family in their household (down 7%) and 52% on themselves (down 6%).
- Despite this, Ontarians continue to worry about the long term impacts the virus will have on the older generation (86% -1) as well as the younger generation (71% no change since April).

Ontarians are more confident about the ability to access mental health services now than they were in April, and more that have done so say it was easy to find. They have managed to stay productive during this outbreak, both with tasks around the home as well as being productive while working from home (although some are having trouble with this in the summer weather). Ontarians also continue to connect with members of their immediate family, although are still having issues connecting with those outside the home. However, there has been a decline in the number of people who wish they had someone to talk to.

- There has been an increase in confidence in finding mental health supports during this outbreak, with 50% of Ontarians feeling confident finding these supports if they were needed, up from 44% in April. Likewise, those who have accessed these supports now find it easier to do so (71% up from 62% in April) and only 40% say it is very difficult to get mental health supports in their community. While the majority continue to find these supports helpful, this has decreased from 77% in April to 73% now.
- Ontarians are still not connecting well with those outside their household, with 48% saying the quality time they spend with these people has worsened while 28% say it has improved, unchanged since April. The amount of quality time they spend with those in the home continues to improve with COVID, with 46% saying it is better since before the outbreak (+6). That said, Ontarians are now less in need of someone to talk to about what is worrying them (34% down from 41% in April).
- While not all Ontarians agree, in general most feel they have been able to be productive during this outbreak. In fact, almost half say they have been more productive when it comes to getting things done around the house (48% compared to 27% who are less productive), while of those working from home 43% said they were more productive at the beginning of the lockdown (compared to 38% less productive) and 41% say they continue to be more productive now, however a similar proportion feel they are less productive in the summer weather (38%). However, Ontarians feel they have been less productive when it comes to taking care of their physical health (42% less productive, 32% more productive) or connecting with friends or family (43% less productive, 32% more productive).
- Substance consumption, such as alcohol or cannabis has not leveled out as the outbreak continues, with 21% saying they are consuming more than before the outbreak (-2) and only 12% are consuming less (-1). Two-thirds are saying their consumption has not changed (34% +1) or they don't consume these products (32% +2).

Despite a slight reprieve in the negative impact of COVID, most Ontarians do not think we are out of the woods yet. They are still concerned that they or someone they love will catch the virus, and that it will impact their physical and mental health. The province moving into Stage 3 is bring up more concerns to the vast majority, particularly that changes are coming to quickly, that more people will get sick, that people are being too relaxed and that a second wave and subsequent lock down will occur.

- COVID numbers decreasing and the province moving into Stage 3 reopening has done little to alleviate the concerns of Ontarians. Still, three-quarters are concerned that friends or family members may catch COVID (76% -2) or that the physical health and wellness of friends or family will be affected (73% +3), while two-thirds continue to worry that they may catch it (67% -2), that they may lose a family member or friend (67% -3) or that it may impact their physical health and wellbeing (61% -1). There are also still concerns about the impact on mental health, with 66% (-1) being concerned about the mental health of friends or family members and 55% being concerned about their own mental health (+2).
- The strong majority have concerns over the move to Stage 3, with 85% being concerned that a second wave will put us back where we started, 84% being concerned about the numbers increasing as businesses open, while the same number are worried about the possibility of more people getting sick in a second wave and 79% that will we have to go back into lockdown. Only one-third (33%) believe we have gotten through the worst and soon will be back to normal. There are concerns over how serious people are taking the threat, with 84% being worried that people in Ontario are not following social distance protocols, 83% that people are becoming relaxed too quickly and 78% that people they know are not following protocols.

Parents have a lot to contend with as we approach the new school year, and no solution is giving them peace. When thinking about their child going back to school, the majority are concerned that protocols may not be followed and that their children might get sick. But when thinking of their child staying home, they are concerned about their ability to provide the educational supports necessary to allow for virtual learning. Regardless of whether their child goes back to school or not, parents are worried about their mental health: either in the form of their mental health when continuing to be in locked down or in the form of their anxiety going back to school.

- Parents have a great deal of concern when it comes to the future of their children's education. When returning to school in September, the vast majority will be concerned that their child will contract COVID themselves (78%) or will

bring it home and infect others in the household (79%). Three-quarters worry that other children will not follow the social distance protocols (77%), while more than half worry their own children won't (59%). Additionally, 61% are concerned about their child's ability to learn in a classroom with social distance protocols.

- However, there are also worries if their children do not go back to school. Two-thirds of parents are concerned about the ability to provide their children the support they need, with 67% being concerned about motivating their child to be productive at home, 64% providing the educational support they need, 63% their child's ability to learn at home and 59% the ability to handle homeschooling along with work responsibilities.
- Regardless of the school decision, parents are also worried about the issues this will cause to their child's and their own mental health. Almost seven-in-ten (68%) are concerned about their child's mental health if school does not start. However, a similar number are worried about their child's (64%) and their own (63%) anxiety if they go to school.