



November 2015: Recovery Month/Unite To Face Addiction



Taking it to the streets: that was the theme this past September as a record number of communities celebrated Recovery Day across Canada. September is National Addiction Recovery Awareness Month, and this year 26 cities across Canada hosted their own initiatives. Much like the Gay Pride movement, the Recovery Movement is coming out of the closet, fighting the shame and stigma associated with addiction. Friends, families and those in recovery gathered for a series of weekend events, trumpeting the cause. Despite heavy rain in Calgary and a TTC closure in Toronto—to name just two—crowds gathered to hear the message of hope.

Since the first Recovery Day celebrations of 2012—when events were held in Victoria and Vancouver—the Recovery Day movement has taken off. These public initiatives are key to our work at FAVOR Canada: we celebrate both the individual recovery journey, and that of the community as a whole. This is the theme of these September rallies, and FAVOR Canada looks forward to being part of 2016 initiatives, when a growing number of communities join the bandwagon and take it to the streets once again. This year, I was



grateful to have had the opportunity to speak at both the Ottawa and Toronto events. With every public celebration of recovery, we are changing language and public perception. Five years from now, we will look back on these early Recovery Day initiatives, and marvel at the energy and spirit of Canadians in fighting for what's right: a world where we support those who have turned a corner in their lives, and those desperate to do the same.

Ann Dowsett Johnston

On October 4, 2015 tens of thousands rallied together at the Washington Mall to make history. More than 700 organizations from around the world; gathered in a show of solidarity to Unite to Face Addiction and end the silence around this urgent global health crisis.

This was a history-making day and the first ever of its kind on the planet.

Nearly forced to cancel the show because of hurricane Joaquin, one of the Unite to Face Addiction board members commented to the performers, 'my whole life was a hurricane for 25 years because of addiction, are we really going to let a little rain get in the way?' And so the show went on - with incredible performances from Joe Walsh, Steven Tyler and Sheryl Crow. The rally also included an announcement from the Surgeon General about the country's first ever report on addiction. This marked a tremendous step - a beginning, to change the conversation from the problem of addiction to the solution- RECOVERY!

FAVOR Canada has partnered with Facing Addiction to open hearts and minds to the urgency of facing addiction head on and to encourage people everywhere to look beyond the stigma and shame and realize that addiction can, and often does, impact the very people they love.

Much like FAVOR Canada, Facing Addiction's goals are to build a platform for the very best experts and organizations in the addiction field to work collaboratively on high impact and scalable solutions. Education is the key. We want to educate people to remember that addiction can be prevented, it can be treated and sustained, long-term recovery is a reality for millions.

With this partnership, our plan is to build a grassroots constituency in Canada to give the millions affected by addiction a voice and to "rebrand addiction" to one of RECOVERY. This can be achieved by bringing together the very best resources in the field to reduce the human and social costs of addiction.

Nationally, 4.4% of the Canadian population meets the criteria for substance use disorders. Of those, only 0.4% access publicly funded treatment. We also have an estimated 4 million people who are living in recovery today- who remain mostly silent.



The time has come for Canada to show the world that recovery is possible. We can do this by celebrating recovery and by giving a voice to the 4 million Canadians who are living in recovery.

In January, after co-hosting the first ever Addiction Recovery summit with the CCSA in Ottawa, the National Recovery Advisory Council (NRAC) was formed in order to bring the [National Commitment to Recovery](#). Favor Canada is a grateful member of this council and we are excited to announce that the Canadian Life in Recovery survey will soon be launched! This survey has also been done in the US, the UK and Australia. Stay tuned over the coming months to find out if you are able to participate and the results which will come later next Spring. It's incredible to think that we will finally have Canadian data about how people found recovery and how they are sustaining it! This information will be invaluable when speaking to the government and will inform their decisions around the funding of programs and services!

Thank you to previous MPs and Welcome to new MPs. FAVOR Canada wishes to thank [NDP MP Paul Dewar](#) for his years of service in Ottawa. Mr. Dewar submitted Motion M-551 to show his support and help us in our efforts to have September recognized as National Addiction Recovery Awareness Month in Canada. Sadly, he was not successful in his riding and this motion will need to be submitted, but we are very grateful to you, Paul! Also of note, MPs John Weston and [David Wilks](#) both lost their seats in the federal election. MP Weston was a huge supporter of our activities from the very first Recovery Day in 2012. MP Wilks was also a supporter, and we are forever grateful for his courageous announcement in the House of Commons that he is in recovery. We wish both MPs well in their next adventures! FAVOR looks forward to working with the new government and our local MPs.

"I've got to say I didn't know a lot of addicts. You know why? Because I never asked. When I opened my mind, there are a heck of a lot of people all around in recovery."

-Dr. Mehmet Oz