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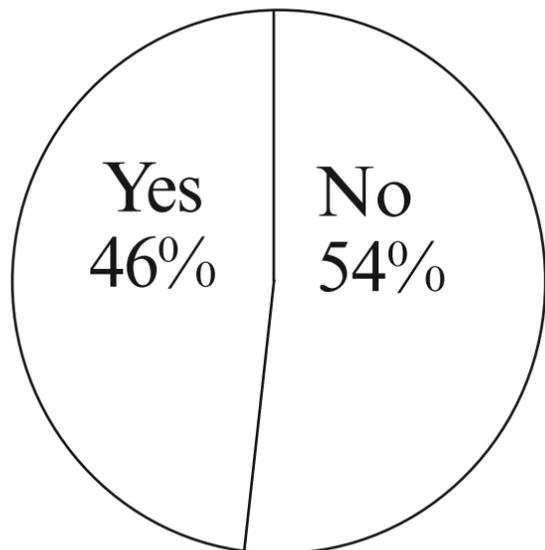
OPINIONS

Publisher Grant Harris, Editor Chris Gareau



Web poll

Do you believe the proposed four-storey Coast Hotel in Smithers could be viable if no LNG projects get built?



Depression widespread, access to treatment inadequate



VIEW FROM THE LEGISLATURE
MLA Doug Donaldson

Most of us know people who at some point in their lives have suffered as a result of clinical depression.

It could be that you've experienced it personally, or with a family member, a neighbour, a friend. Statistics Canada says that one in 20 Canadians have the symptoms that meet the threshold for a clinical depression diagnosis. That's a sobering number and makes it very real when you consider the number of people in your extended family, friendships, work and community relationships.

Of course, if detected early and appropriate help is forthcoming, then the debilitating impacts of depression can be diminished and overcome.

That is why a recent study by the University of British Columbia is very troubling. The study considered 110,000 people in B.C. who were diagnosed with depression in 2010-11 and the treatment they received.

The most shocking result: only about half (53 per cent) received the minimum adequate care.

Minimum adequate care was considered as 12 weeks of antidepressant therapy or at least four counselling or psychotherapy sessions.

And two factors made the results even more disturbing: one, the author pointed out that the study just considered those who actually sought treatment and did not capture the large number in B.C. who are clinically depressed but don't seek medical attention (49 per cent of Canadians who believe they have depression never seek treatment); two, younger age groups have a relatively higher level of depression.

That last point is extremely important because early detection and treatment when warning signs are exhibited in children and youth is well known to alleviate further symptoms during adulthood.

As deputy chair of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth's report *Concrete Actions for Systemic Change* on youth mental health services that was released in January, I was happy that one of the significant recommendations to government is that children, youth and young adults identified as exhibiting signs of behavioural, emotional or mental health issues are assessed within 30 days and begin receiving treatment within the next 30 days.

So far, the BC Liberals haven't committed to that recommendation. This new finding on the lack of adequate treatment for depression demonstrates even further that unacceptable gaps exist in this province for those needing help with their mental health.

— Doug Donaldson is the MLA for Stikine and Opposition critic for Children and Family Development.



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