

# meao



## THE MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO (MEAO)

*MEAO – an organization representing and supporting the medical conditions of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (ES/MCS)*

### DIRECTORS' REPORT

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

September 29, 2021

The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario (MEAO) last held an Annual General Meeting (AGM) on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. This report details activities from that meeting to present.

The Covid-19 pandemic started in March 2020 and from that date to now, MEAO has held its board meetings online via Zoom. This has proven to be a very successful way of holding meetings and getting business completed.

#### **REFRESHING THE ASSOCIATION:**

##### **New By-laws:**

The first step in refreshing the association was ratifying MEAO's new by-laws at the AGM of 2018.

##### **Updating the Objects:**

The next step in refreshing the association was updating our very old and out of date Objects, after which new Supplementary Letters Patent were approved on November 13, 2020.

As a reminder, these are the new Objects of MEAO:

To advance education and improve care, treatment and support of individuals in Ontario who are living with complex, chronic, environmentally-linked medical conditions, focused on, but not limited to, myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), fibromyalgia (FM), and environmental sensitivities/multiple chemical sensitivity (ES/MCS), by:

- (i) *Providing support to individuals, their families and caregivers, such as, publishing newsletters and maintaining website(s) with current information about the relevant conditions; and*
- (ii) *Working with relevant government and public agencies, health and social services agencies and other professionals, the media and the public.*

### **MEAO's Change of Address and Head Office**

At the AGM of September 29, 2021, the members approved the **Special Resolution for Change of Address and Head Office**. Thank you.

As most of you are aware, MEAO had a small office for a few years at 170 The Donway West, Toronto. When MEAO's lease expired in the spring of 2014, the landlord Rockport, allowed MEAO to use Rockport's address at 170 The Donway West, Suite 307, Toronto as MEAO's head office address and for collection of mail.

Since the expiry of MEAO's lease, the former Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC), now Alliance for Healthier Communities (Alliance), through its partnership, allowed MEAO to have board meetings and other meetings at their office at of 970 Lawrence Avenue West, Suite 500, Toronto.

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck, everything changed. MEAO has held all meetings via Zoom as Alliance's employees have been working offsite. Further, Rockport was concerned about people entering their building and asked MEAO to change its arrangements. Because MEAO requires the Resolution of the membership to change head office, we had to wait until the AGM. Rockport agreed to an extension to end of October. As a note, the mail is picked up only every few weeks to reduce the number of times entering the building.

Alliance has agreed to allow MEAO to use Alliance's address at 970 Lawrence Avenue West, Suite 500, Toronto as its head office and for collection of mail.

### **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:**

- MEAO's financial statements for the year ending 2020 were distributed to all members in the AGM package
- The MEAO Board has once again engaged the firm of Welch LLP, who are proficient in charity and not-for-profit organizations, as our chartered accountants.
- The report of Welch LLP concerning the MEAO's financial statements of 2020 was presented for approval at the AGM

### **Nominations Report:**

The Nominations Report was distributed to all members in the AGM package and was reviewed at the AGM.

### **MEAO'S Website is being refreshed:**

We are very happy to advise that MEAO's website refreshment is progressing and we hope to launch it in the Fall of 2021. As we said last year, this has not been an easy job as we are doing this work with minimal funds and external support.

### **Name Change:**

The board hopes to look at the name change for MEAO in the coming months. We will be looking to begin this work in 2022 after the new website is up.

### **May 12<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS DAY FOR MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS/CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME, FIBROMYALGIA AND ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITIES/MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY**

MEAO held a very successful awareness day event on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2021 via Webinar. Dr. Brian Schwartz was our keynote speaker. Dr. Schwartz presented an outline of the Action Plan for the recommendations from the Task Force on Environmental Health, and he was ably assisted by Bill Manson at Q and A time.

Dr. Schwartz is the Vice-President of Public Health Ontario and he's also on the Science Table of the Covid-19 Advisory for Ontario. That's why we were so fortunate to have his presentation because while working on Covid-19 since early 2020, he still undertook the Action Plan of the Recommendations of the final report of the Task Force on Environmental Health.

We're attaching a copy of Dr. Schwartz's slide deck once again, with the AGM reporting letter; we also sent it in our Newsletter of June, 2021.

### **THE ACTION PLAN REGARDING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

#### **Background:**

As you know, the final report of the Task Force on Environmental Health was submitted to the Minister of Health, Christine Elliott in December, 2018 with many recommendations. After several delays, the Minister of Health announced in early 2020, that she had appointed Dr. Brian Schwartz, Vice President Public Health Ontario to review the recommendations of the final

report of the task force and submit a report to the Minister with recommendations for developing an implementation plan. The report to the Minister was to be completed in six months being approximately July, 2020. However, in March 2020 COVID-19 intervened and the work was put on pause.

Then in MEAO's Newsflash of October 2020 we announced some very welcome and wonderful news from Dr. Schwartz, who advised that the review would go forward with the help of Bill Manson who had joined Public Health Ontario in the role of Strategic Advisor, Environmental Health to work directly with Dr. Schwartz. Bill has been well known to MEAO for many years and he was a member of the Task Force until he had to resign due to other matters needing his immediate attention. Bill's role was to advise and assist Dr. Schwartz with the report for the Minister of Health.

Dr. Schwartz and Bill Manson had a slide deck presentation for MEAO's May 12<sup>th</sup> Awareness Day event which was held via webinar. The presentation was called "PHO Update for MEAO Awareness Day". It was a high-level presentation of the proposed action plan report.

At that time, Dr Schwartz assured us that their final report would be submitted to the Minister in the next few months.

### Update

During the summer, we learned that the action plan final report was submitted to the Minister. Almost immediately, we began to follow up with the Minister's office to determine next steps and timelines.

We had hoped that the Minister could announce more specifics by the AGM but we have been told that they need some more time.

**The Minister of Health statement provided for MEAO's AGM is as follows:**

*"The Ministry of Health has reviewed the Public Health Ontario recommendations and is currently exploring options for implementation that will directly benefit Ontarians.*

*We remain committed to working with MEAO and health partners across the province to better support individuals affected by Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, and acknowledge the impact of these illnesses on Ontarians. "*

While the statement is not very specific, we do believe that the Minister's office is actively working on this file and that they are committed to continuing to keep MEAO informed and updated.

As always, we will keep our members up to date as we learn more.

## **COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF ONTARIO (CPSO):**

Many patients with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (ES/MCS) not only consult their family medical physician, but Integrative Medical Physicians to access Complementary and Alternative (Medicine (CAM) and related therapies to manage their medical conditions.

You are all aware that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) has not looked favourably on medical physicians in Ontario using Complementary and Alternative Medicine mostly because they feel not enough research has been done to prove that it works.

Early in 2021, the CPSO drafted an updated policy regarding Complementary and Alternative Medicine as practiced by the Integrative Medical Physicians and other groups and therapists in Ontario. That draft threatened to put at risk the patient's ability to access Integrative Medicine. After consultation, CPSO was scheduled to implement its new policy in June 2021.

MEAO wrote a letter to the CPSO which was posted on their website. It requested that CPSO withdraw the current proposed policy and instead begin an open and transparent process that learns from leading jurisdictions around the world and that brings together CPSO, leading physicians and patient experts to develop a revised policy.

MEAO was a signatory in a letter of an ad hoc coalition of advocacy groups writing to the CPSO and Minister Christine Elliott asking that the CPSO's current policy be withdrawn. The letter was very detailed and outlines all the policy related issues.

In March 2021, MEAO sent out a Newsflash and Action Alert to its database. We advised that the patients with ME/CFS, FM and ES/MCS need to give their feedback to the CPSO. The patients had to add their voice and tell their story. The CPSO had to hear how their proposed policy would impact the patient and their family or caregivers.

The letters and feedback from all the ad hoc advocacy organizations (including MEAO) and the patients of Ontario with ME/CFS, FM and ES/MCS have proven to be very effective and successful because in September 2021, the CPSO produced a new policy for CAM which is much more favourable to the patients and the Integrative Medical Physicians of Ontario.

## **THANK YOU TO MEAO's Board of Directors**

I'd like to thank the board of directors of 2020-2021 for all their hard work, contributions and support to MEAO

Denise Magi, Adrianna Tetley, Keith Deviney, John Doherty and Laurie Menard.

I'd also thank our very efficient administrative assistant, Wafaa Arbaji.

The MEAO Board of Directors would also like to say a **special thank you** to all the members and friends of MEAO who made many welcome and generous donations to MEAO.

**MEAO's Website:**

<http://www.meao.ca/>

**The joint website of MEAO and Alliance for Healthier Communities (formerly Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC) being a Campaign for the Ontario Centre of Excellence in Environmental Health:**

<http://recognitioninclusionandequity.org/>

**Correspondence to MEAO:**

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