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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)

WHY MEAO NEEDS A NEW NAME

Backgrounder

May 2022

The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario (MEAO) became a registered corporation in April 1992.

At the beginning, the corporation focused on the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. By 2010 the corporation expanded its focus to other comorbid conditions and therefore, became known as 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).

In 2018, the organization began a refresh process which was to include an update of the corporation's By-Laws, revised Objects, a change of name, and a new website. Each process took substantial time and in most cases extra funding and legalities. So far, the organization has tackled its By-Laws, its Objects and now it's time for the change of name.

Thirty years is a long time with the same name – The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario. While most people have come to understand that MEAO represents all three conditions, the reality is that we need to continually remind people that we do not just represent ME/CFS.

The reality is we need a name that encompasses all three of the medical conditions that we support and represent being Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (ES/MCS).

The time is also right. There is increasing interest in combatting these conditions that result in pain, social isolation and debilitating fatigue.

To that end, we need to change our name and tell a fresh, compelling story. A name that reflects the work we do to advocate for a system of care for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (ES/MCS); that better speaks to the work we do to communicate with the Ontario Ministry of Health for release and implementation of the Action Plan Report of Dr. Brian Schwartz

of Public Health Ontario, regarding the implementing of the recommendations of the Task Force on Environmental Health.

The MEAO board of directors realized it needed some professional assistance and as a result, we entered into a structured process to arrive at the new name. Jeff Swystun, a globally recognized branding expert, volunteered his time to work with the Board. Jeff informed us of trends in non-profit and association branding; he framed the situation for context, and initially presented over 30 name candidates across three different themes.

The 30 were reduced to 8 through discussion and evaluated against objective criteria. As Jeff advised, naming is an objective process but the reaction to a new name is highly subjective. He helped the Board manage this challenging process.

The 8 were then creatively presented to the MEAO Board. They were shown as if on a website, poster, promotional items and various other communications. The names were also presented with potential taglines and descriptions. Further, Jeff wrote a short brand story for our organization. After another round of deliberations, we landed on the name.

The combination of name, tagline and description is powerful. It provides the solution of simplifying the name but telling a richer story. A new name takes time to be adopted. We have to bring it to life, give it support and use it smartly and creatively. We invite you to read the following page more than once. Take some time to let it sink in and hopefully experience the intended impact.

NOTE: At the upcoming special membership meeting, registered MEAO members will be voting on the NAME only, not the tagline. The Name of the Corporation is the only legal change.

Taglines can change and we may have more than one at the same time. Taglines change from time to time depending on our shifting focus of our work etc.

We look for your support in making this important and exciting change that better reflects our organization.

THE NAME

CareNow Ontario

Improving lives for people
with environmentally-linked medical conditions

- We create awareness and drive action to take on the medical conditions of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity.
- We advocate for a system of care to alleviate pain and suffering of nearly one million people in Ontario with chronic, complex environmentally-linked medical conditions. People who are you, your spouse, caregivers, friend, family member or colleague. Every day you bravely endure debilitating fatigue, emotional stress, and physical pain. It severely limits your lifestyle, erodes your confidence while straining relationships.
- Those close to the sufferers are often confused and frustrated. They cannot understand what the other is going through. Sometimes to the point of calling the sufferer lazy or suggesting they are faking or that it is all in their head. The situation can grow worse. Sufferers are prone to social isolation, depression, anxiety, panic disorder and suicidal tendencies.
- This is not understood or accepted by wider society, creating helplessness for those struggling. Yet, it is all too real, and action is demanded. This situation produces a huge loss of productivity in Ontario and strains the healthcare system.
- All anyone wants to do is get up and get out. To be healthy, active and happy. To have purpose, make valuable contributions, and have rewarding relationships.
- That is why we will continue to advocate for a better system of care for those afflicted with ME/CFS, FM and ES/MCS, their families, caregivers and friends so everyone can lead fulfilling and productive lives.