

Peer Support Takes Centre Stage as National Conference Sells Out in Ottawa

350+ leaders from Nunavut to New Zealand will gather during Mental Health Awareness Month to advance the role of lived experience in mental health and substance use care.



Ottawa, Ontario May 7, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.IssueWire.com)) - Comedian and mental health advocate Jessica Holmes and Order of Canada recipient, musician, and recovery speaker Sean McCann will headline the Power of Peer Support Conference, a sold-out national event bringing more than 350 leaders, researchers, clinicians, peer supporters, policymakers, workplace innovators, and community organizations to Ottawa from May 12–14, 2026.

Hosted by Mental Health Innovations in partnership with Peer Support Canada and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, the conference will bring participants together at the Delta Hotels Ottawa City Centre, with attendees travelling from as far as Nunavut to New Zealand for a landmark conversation on the future of peer support in mental health and substance use care.

Taking place during Mental Health Awareness Month, the conference marks a decisive shift from awareness to action, focusing on how peer support can be mobilized at scale to strengthen mental health and substance use systems across Canada.

Holmes and McCann are lending their voices, lived experience, and national platforms to a first-of-its-kind Canadian conference placing peer support at the centre of the mental health and substance use conversation.

“We are thrilled to be welcoming such a diverse and engaged group of participants to Ottawa,” said Lauren Scott, Director of Client Services at Mental Health Innovations. “Our team has worked intensively to bring this event to life, and the level of engagement we’re seeing from healthcare professionals, researchers, and sector leaders signals that peer support is gaining the attention and momentum it deserves.”

Over three days, participants will engage in sessions led by national leaders, researchers, and frontline practitioners, exploring how peer support can be integrated across healthcare, workplaces, public safety, substance use health, and community-based systems.

“Mental health and substance use challenges are affecting Canadians, workplaces, and our economy at a scale we can no longer ignore. Clinical systems alone cannot meet this demand. What is particularly encouraging is seeing more researchers, clinicians, and healthcare leaders paying attention to peer support than ever before and recognizing it not as supplementary, but as a critical part of Canada’s mental health and substance use response. This is a defining moment for Canada,” said Stephane Grenier, Founder and CEO of Mental Health Innovations.

Through their participation, Jessica Holmes and Sean McCann are helping amplify a growing national conversation about the role peer support can play in strengthening how Canadians respond to mental health and substance use challenges.



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