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Sep 3, 2013

Hon. Jason Kenney, PC, MP
325 East Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

RE: FINA Pre-budget consultations – Recommendations affecting Employment and Social Development Canada

Mr. Kenney

The National ME/FM Action Network would like to welcome you to your new position as Minister of Employment and Social Development. We look forward to working with you to address some very important employment and social development issues related to Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) and Fibromyalgia (FM).

Our organization is a registered Canadian charity working on behalf of Canadians with ME/CFS and FM. According to Statistics Canada's 2010 Canadian Community Health Survey, there were over 750,000 Canadians who had been diagnosed with one or both of these conditions. The survey also shows that these conditions are very disabling. We would like to point you to statistics at on our website that show how disabling ME/CFS and FM are in comparison to other well know medical conditions.
http://mefmaction.com/images/stories/quest_newsletters/Quest80springsummer2009.pdf

Canada has a system for supporting Canadians with disabilities. The system includes accommodation at work or school, income supports for people whose disability impairs their ability to work, and strategies to encourage participation in the community. The disability system has its strengths and weakness that need constant attention. We, like many other disability groups, would encourage the government to review the current system in light of the new United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Canadians with ME/CFS and FM have challenges above and beyond those encountered by people with classic disabilities because the disabilities that come with ME/CFS and FM are not well known or recognized. Time and again, people with ME/CFS or FM are called upon to prove that they are disabled or to convince authorities that their impairments qualify for disability services. Many programs or services take a narrow view of disability that excludes the ME/FM

community. The disability system is meaningless for people with disabilities who cannot access it. There is enormous suffering in the community because of access issues.

With this in mind, our organization made a submission to the pre-budget consultation process of the House of Commons Finance Committee's (FINA). A copy of our submission is attached. As you will see, one of our recommendations is the establishment of an inter-departmental task force co-chaired by the Office of Disability Issues to review government information, services and programs to ensure inclusion of the ME/CFS and FM community.

We hope to have the opportunity to meet with you and your staff before Parliament reconvenes this autumn to discuss this recommendation and other issues affecting our community.

Margaret Parlor
President
National ME/FM Action Network