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FLORA'S WALK: A FUNDRAISER FOR PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

The Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative (CPMHC) is holding its first national fundraiser walkathon - [Flora's Walk for Perinatal Mental Health](#) - on May 4th, 2022, to coincide with World Maternal Mental Health Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—OTTAWA, ON—Flora Babakhani's lifelong dream was to be a mother. At 44 years old, after years of fertility treatments, Flora, a single mom by choice of Toronto, Ontario, finally and happily became pregnant. Tragically, on January 14th 2022, two months and ten days after Flora gave birth to her daughter Amber, she died by suicide due to undiagnosed postpartum psychosis.

The Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative (CPMHC) is holding its first national fundraiser walkathon - [Flora's Walk for Perinatal Mental Health](#) - on May 4th, 2022, coinciding with World Maternal Mental Health Day. The walk is to not only help Flora's family but to also ensure that the work of improving perinatal mental healthcare in Canada continues. Unlike the UK, Australia and the US, Canada does not have a National Perinatal Mental Health Strategy.

"This shouldn't have happened," says Patricia Tomasi, Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of CPMHC. "We can never say for sure, but we know that if Flora had been properly assessed and treated for perinatal mental illness, it's highly possible she would still be with us here today and her baby would still have her mother."

Postpartum psychosis happens to approximately 1-2 in 1000 women. It is one of the rarest perinatal mental health disorders along the perinatal mental illness spectrum but is a medical emergency that requires immediate attention. Symptoms can include paranoia, hyperactivity, rapid mood swings, and delusions or strange beliefs. The rate of perinatal mental illness has risen from 1 in 5 pre-pandemic to 1 in 3, with 40% of women and 20% of men in Canada currently suffering from a perinatal mental illness, and rates are even higher for marginalized people.

"We want to make sure what happened to Flora never happens again to anyone in Canada; it is simply unacceptable!," says Jaime Charlebois, Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of CPMHC. "Perinatal mental illness is treatable and supports are available."

Flora's Walk for Perinatal Mental Health will be raising funds for little Amber who will be adopted by Flora's sister, Mimi, as well as other families in need, local organizations, training scholarships to health care practitioners, and to CPMHC to continue their advocacy and awareness work.

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, MP Pam Damoff, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, and Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health for Ottawa Public Health will all be speaking at the kick-off ceremony leading into the walk. MP Damoff will be presenting a statement in the House of Commons on Flora's Walk and World Maternal Mental Health Day later that day.

Moms, partners, babies, family and friends are all invited to join for a stroller walk to discuss, promote and support perinatal mental health.

For more information on Flora's Walk and/or how to donate and sign up as an individual walker or a Walk Leader please go to: <https://cpmhc.ca/join-floras-walk/>

To interview Patricia or Jaime about the event, or on perinatal mental health, please contact:

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