



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mental Health Commission of Canada Promised \$110 Million For Research To Help The Homeless Living With Mental Illness

CALGARY, AB February 26, 2008 — Michael Kirby, Chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), today expressed the Commission's appreciation to the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, the Finance Minister, the Honourable James Flaherty and the Honourable Tony Clement, the Minister of Health, for their leadership in promising \$110 million to the MHCC for research projects to help Canadians with mental illness who are homeless. A high percentage of homeless people in Canada have mental health problems.

"Very little is known about the most effective ways of providing services to people living with mental illness who are homeless," said Mr. Kirby. "What they require is a complex basket of services including supportive housing, access to primary health care and a wide range of other supports."

The Commission will set up five demonstration research projects across Canada. Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Moncton have been selected as sites for the research programs. Each project will focus on a distinct group of people living with mental illness who are homeless such as those who also have a substance abuse problem, Aboriginal Canadians and non-English speaking new immigrants. The demonstration projects will run simultaneously over a five year period.

"Collectively, the projects will develop a body of evidence which will enable Canada to lead the world in providing services to people living with mental illness who are homeless," said Michael Kirby.

The research will also contribute to the Commission's development of a national mental health strategy as well as to its efforts to reduce the stigmatization of mental illness and eliminate the discrimination that many people living with mental health problems and illnesses face on a daily basis.

The Mental Health Commission also looks forward to collaborating on these projects with a variety of partners: provincial and municipal governments, regional health authorities, service providers and service users.

The MHCC is a non-profit organization created to focus national attention on mental health issues. It is funded by the federal government but operates at arm's length from all levels of government. The Commission's objective is to enhance the health and social outcomes for Canadians living with mental health problems and illnesses.

To achieve this goal the Commission is pursuing three key initiatives: leading the development of a national mental health strategy; creating a ten-year campaign to reduce the widespread stigma associated with mental health problems and illnesses and eliminate the discrimination many people living with mental health problems and illnesses confront daily; and establishing a Knowledge Exchange Centre to make information about mental health and mental illness available to all Canadians and improve communication and collaboration across the mental health sector.

The Commission was announced by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in response to one of the recommendations in the report by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, titled *Out of the Shadows at Last*. Former Senator Michael Kirby was Chair of the Senate Committee at the time the report was released.

About the Mental Health Commission of Canada

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of 11 non-governmental members, and seven who are appointed by Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments as well as the Chair – the Honourable Michael Kirby, who was appointed by the Government of Canada. The Board is assisted in its work by eight Advisory Committees.

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